



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 113th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 157

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2013

No. 4

House of Representatives

Hurricane Sandy Relief

HON. CHRIS SMITH OF NEW JERSEY

(excerpts of remarks)

Mr. Speaker: When emergencies strike, large or small, Americans can always be counted on to assist and to support the victims.

At our core, we are a Nation of Good Samaritans. After Superstorm Sandy came ashore in New Jersey and devastated the region, first responders courageously rescued people trapped in homes and cars. They often had minimal regard for their own personal welfare, safety and well-being. Everyone rallied around the clock.

Governor Chris Christie, Emergency Management personnel, the National Guard, police and fire, elected officials, the Monmouth County OEM director Sheriff Shaun Golden were absolutely tenacious and effective, and our local mayors were like NFL quarterbacks—running the plays, making calls day by day, hour by hour.

Faith-based organizations helped feed and clothe and shelter. Private voluntary org-

anizations were on the scene in droves. Our neighbors to the north, west, and south poured in to the State to help restore power and remove fallen trees. Words are inadequate to convey my—our—appreciation.

Within weeks, however, the emergency phase seamlessly matriculated into the recovery phase—the flip side of the same coin. Now the big question is this: will the feds have our backs as we strive to recover? It is an absolutely arduous process. I believe that we will.

Any delay in appropriating sufficient funds will likely stall a comprehensive and robust recovery. Sandy was the most destructive storm ever in our region and, arguably, the second or third most costly in America's history.

The Governor's office has estimated the damage in my State alone to be \$36.9 billion. Homes like this one—22,000 homes like this one—completely and totally destroyed. Another 324,000 homes damaged; 41,000 people can't return to those homes—they're still not fixed. Businesses also took it on the chin: 19,000 New Jersey businesses suffered damage of a quarter

of a million dollars or more.

Three-quarters of New Jersey businesses were hurt by Sandy. When asked, they put the small business loss at \$8.3 billion. No wonder 100,000 storm-related unemployment claims have been filed. The Governor's office points out that public facilities and infrastructure sustained the same losses of some \$7 billion.

Boardwalks were snapped like toothpicks, beaches have eroded, and some have been radically reconfigured.

Significantly more funds are needed if New Jersey and our good friends in New York and other Sandy impacted areas are to recover. The Frelinghuysen amendment is absolutely crucial.

We are not crying wolf here, I say to my colleagues. There are huge gaps. People who have filed for insurance claims find insurance has covered only this much. How do they ever recover?

The same goes for the infrastructure in New Jersey. 860,000 people every single day use New Jersey transit. That infrastructure has been demolished—locomotives, cars, tracks as well as stations.

Critical Army Corps projects need to be reconstructed and repaired, while new initiatives need to be funded. We need this money. And we need it now... .

I strongly support Mr. Frelinghuysen's amendment. Madam Chair, gaps in home-owners insurance coverage and a growing realization that there will be major tax receipt losses from towns that have had their tax bases eviscerated by Sandy is further compounded in a State that's reeling from a body blow with no precedent.

All of this has led to crippling shortfalls. Towns have serious gaps in needed resources. They need our help. The \$33 billion Frelinghuysen amendment fills those gaps for people in need of housing assistance, public infrastructure destroyed or damaged by Sandy will get a huge boost, and economic revitalization will accelerate.

I've lost count, Madam Chair, of the number of my constituents who either didn't have flood insurance for their homes or who had an inadequate amount of coverage. To compound their misery, many have upside-down mortgages, and they desperately need our help.

The Frelinghuysen amendment raises to \$16 billion from \$3.9 billion in the Rogers amendment, funds to aid in the relief of homeowners, buyouts, and home elevation. It will also provide very critical moneys for the Army Corps of Engineers. Where the Army Corps had projects in place, there was a mitigation of the amount of damage to infrastructure and to homes. We need this additional funding to protect homes, businesses so millions of people can get on with their lives.