

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 13, 2002

The Honorable George E. Pataki
Governor of the State of New York
Executive Chamber, State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Pataki:

We write to bring your attention to an important and time-sensitive issue regarding one of FEMA's disaster recovery programs operating in New York. The Individual and Family Grant program (IFG) assists those affected by the September 11th terrorist attacks to "cover necessary expenses and serious disaster-related needs" including home repairs, replacement of personal property, transportation, reimbursement for damages, moving and storage, vacuums, and air purifiers. The IFG program provides crucial services to affected New Yorkers. We are pleased that you have just recently requested that FEMA extend the program until January 31, 2003, so that more individuals may benefit from this program. We were planning to ask you to request this extension immediately, and we are glad that this will now not be necessary.

However, we are concerned not only with the backlog that apparently exists in approving the applications to the IFG program, but also what seems to be a very high rejection rate. Currently, of the 51,469 applications that have been received, 6,874 have been approved and 21,544 have been rejected. While FEMA has indicated that they are willing to assist the state to process these applications more quickly, we would like to know why so many applicants have been rejected. Initially, FEMA's Mortgage and Rental Assistance Program (MRA) also rejected many applicants to the program. While FEMA ultimately adjusted the program to help more applicants, we believe that the state must ensure that the IFG program is helping the individuals who need assistance.

Therefore, we have the following questions:

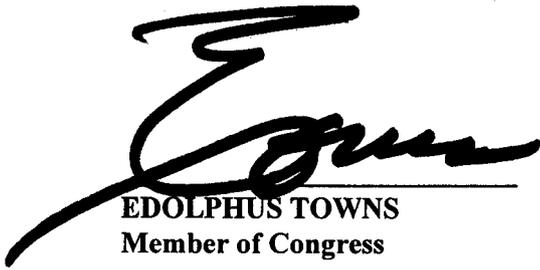
- Why does a backlog exist in processing the applications to the IFG program?
- What steps are you planning to take to ensure that the applications are processed more quickly?
- Will you request assistance from FEMA to deal with the current backlog?
- Why does the rejection rate for applicants seem to be so high?
- What assurances can you give that the rejection rate is high because the applicants are legitimately ineligible for assistance and that it is not because of problems in the implementation of the program?

We thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,


CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress

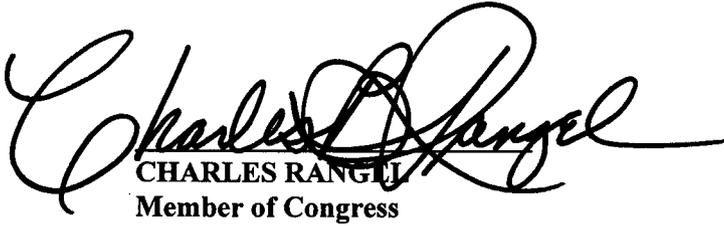

JOSÉ SERRANO
Member of Congress



EDOLPHUS TOWNS
Member of Congress



STEVE ISRAEL
Member of Congress



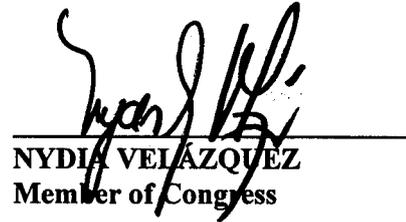
CHARLES RANGEL
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