



STATE OF VERMONT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

April 8, 2025

The Honorable Governor Phil Scott
Office of the Governor
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

The Honorable Speaker Jill Krowinski
Vermont House of Representatives
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

The Honorable Senate President Pro Tempore Phil Baruth
Vermont Senate
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Governor Scott, Speaker Krowinski, President Pro Tempore Baruth, and Legislative Party Leaders,

I'm writing to you about one of the urgent challenges presented by changes at the federal level that will directly impact Vermont's disaster preparedness and response. Proposed reductions to FEMA's role in recovery and the elimination of the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program will leave Vermont more vulnerable to disasters like flooding, heatwaves, and other hazards and make recovery after natural disaster even more difficult for our communities.

On March 31st, a diverse coalition of more than 100 organizations, businesses, and faith leaders sent [a letter to you and all members of the Vermont General Assembly](#) urging us to act with the

urgency and resolve this moment calls for. Their message is clear: Vermonters want to hear from our leaders that we are ready to protect our communities and ensure the safety and well-being of citizens.

We must prepare for the possibility that federal assistance may not be available when disaster strikes and communicate that to our communities and regions. While Vermont has state and local hazard mitigation plans in place, they are not fully implemented. There are gaps in resources, training, and coordination that can hinder our ability to act quickly and effectively when disaster hits. These shortcomings, combined with reduced federal assistance, will leave our communities vulnerable—and closing these gaps requires focused collaboration, leadership and action at all levels of government.

To meet these challenges head-on, I urge you to consider immediate action in these and other disaster-related areas:

- **Strengthen local emergency management:** Invest available human and financial resources into municipalities to support the full implementation of their hazard mitigation plans and improve disaster response preparedness. Local responders need better resources and training to act quickly when disaster hits. State leadership has a critical role to play in organizing and coordinating support for towns, ensuring they can execute their plans effectively and protect their communities.
- **Build regional disaster response hubs:** Strengthen coordination with neighboring New England states to share resources, services, and expertise. A regional approach will ensure that Vermont has backup when federal resources are stretched thin. State leaders can help organize and facilitate these efforts, ensuring that the resources and support our communities will need is available when required.
- **Create volunteer-driven mutual aid networks:** Develop and formalize networks of volunteers at the state, regional, and local levels. These networks are crucial for responding to emergencies when state and federal resources are unavailable or delayed. State leaders can play a pivotal role in organizing and coordinating these volunteer efforts, ensuring that help is mobilized quickly and effectively.

What will we wish we had done 3 months or one year from now if we are once again hit with devastating flooding or heat - and this time have less federal assistance?

Clear, timely, and direct communication is an important tool for reducing fear. Vermonters want to hear from you - our state leadership - about what steps we're taking to ensure their safety and security, and to ensure that our state, local, and regional emergency systems are as prepared as they can be. Vermonters I am hearing from also want to know how to help.

I know there is a lot of uncertainty and many urgent issues. I have no doubt you are working to make sure Vermont is prepared for whatever lies ahead. Thank you for your attention to this issue as well. Please let me know how I can assist.

Sincerely,

Rep. Laura Sibia

Vermont House of Representatives

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Cc: Senator Kesha Ram Hinsdale

Senator Scott Beck

Representative Lori Houghton

Representative Patti McCoy

Rep. Kate Logan