

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

September 25, 2025

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
Office of the President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Mr. President:

We urge you to immediately fire Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Kristi Noem and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Acting Administrator David Richardson. To serve at the highest levels of our disaster response agencies is to be entrusted with a profound privilege: protecting our nation when disaster strikes. Instead, their failures—marked by negligence and the raiding of taxpayer funds and government staff for political purposes, and efforts to cover it all up—have left communities abandoned in the face of tragedy and our nation the most vulnerable it has been to disasters since before Congress passed the Post-Katrina Emergency Response Act (PKEMRA). A new report from the non-partisan Government Accountability Office (GAO) further confirms their dereliction of duty and violation of the law, underscoring the urgency of immediate action.ⁱ End the waste, fraud, and abuse. Put professionals back in charge of protecting Americans.

All Americans grieved for the Hill Country communities in Texas ripped apart by the extreme flooding of the Guadalupe River on Independence Day. The disaster and FEMA's botched response have dominated headlines as one of the deadliest rain events in recent U.S. history. More than 130 people lost their lives, including dozens of children who washed away in the night while FEMA fumbled the search and rescue response. Secretary Noem's failure to approve aerial imagery requests, cancelation of disaster-response call center contracts, and the delayed deployment of search and rescue teams until 72 hours after the flooding began is unforgivable. When it comes to disaster response and American lives, our nation should not improvise and, yet that seems to be the leadership principle of your appointees.

According to GAO's recent report, FEMA has violated the law six times since the beginning of your administration when it delayed or withheld the obligation of funding Congress approved for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program and Shelter and Services Program.ⁱⁱ Though GAO did "garner sufficient publicly available evidence... to draw conclusions about the agency's compliance" with the law, when GAO contacted DHS for additional information, Secretary Noem's team refused to respond regarding the status of lifesaving aid for disaster survivors.ⁱⁱⁱ This decision is as disturbing as it is dangerous and suggestive of a coverup. FEMA cannot afford dead weight in the middle of peak hurricane season. This level of bureaucratic incompetence is putting lives at risk when the next natural disaster hits.

Alongside these failures, dedicated FEMA staff have raised the alarm through their *Katrina Declaration* that Secretary Noem and Acting Administrator Richardson have abandoned the lifesaving federal disaster response framework.^{iv} The Trump administration has shifted hundreds of millions in FEMA funding to building immigration detention facilities, canceled billions of dollars in disaster protection grants, and sent half of FEMA's human resources and security employees to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) when they are needed during the height of hurricane season. In addition, Secretary Noem's new rule forcing states and aid groups to deny help to undocumented survivors is both cruel and unconstitutional. Citizens and lawful residents are already getting wrongfully detained as part of Secretary Noem's quest to fill dangerous daily deportation quotas.^v They will further suffer if forced to produce information which a disaster may have rendered unavailable simply to receive food and water.

Each of these decisions is dangerous and the collective peril they create for the American people is astounding. The GAO report also found FEMA began the 2025 hurricane season with just 12

percent of its incident management workforce available, warning that staffing policies under Secretary Noem could mean disaster for future response efforts. Instead of championing a robust disaster management system, GAO concluded that Secretary Noem’s staffing policies, “Could Mean Disaster for Future Response Efforts.”^{vi} The *Katrina Declaration* states that “two decades later, FEMA is enacting processes and leadership structures that echo the conditions PKEMRA was designed to prevent.”^{vii} Retaliation against whistleblowing staff who signed the *Katrina Declaration* only magnifies Secretary Noem’s lost priorities and the diminished security of our homeland under her tenure.^{viii}

Responding to disasters isn’t just a job, it’s America’s promise to our citizens. That’s why we are demanding you immediately dismiss Secretary Noem and Acting Administrator Richardson. The American people expect and deserve competency at the top of DHS and FEMA. Fire them now before another tragedy strikes.

Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress



Troy A. Carter, Sr.
Member of Congress



Greg Stanton
Member of Congress



Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



Herbert C. Conaway, Jr.
Member of Congress



Donald Norcross
Member of Congress



Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

ⁱ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Department of Homeland Security—Application of the Impoundment Control Act to Federal Emergency Management Agency Fiscal Year 2025 Federal Assistance Appropriations* (File B-337204.1), GAO (2025), available at <https://www.gao.gov/assets/890/881507.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} “Katrina Declaration and Petition to Congress,” Stand Up For Science, available at <https://www.standupforscience.net/fema-katrina-declaration>.

^v Sabrina Franza, Lauren Victory, and Sara Tenenbaum, “2 U.S. citizens among 7 detained at early morning Elgin, Illinois ICE raid,” September 18, 2025, CBS News Chicago, available at <https://www.cbsnews.com/chicago/news/ice-raid-elgin-illinois/>.

^{vi} U.S. Government Accountability Office, “FEMA Staffing Shortage Could Mean Disaster for Future Response Efforts,” September 17, 2025, available at <https://www.gao.gov/blog/fema-staffing-shortages-could-mean-disaster-future-response-efforts>.

^{vii} “Katrina Declaration and Petition to Congress,” Stand Up For Science, available at <https://www.standupforscience.net/fema-katrina-declaration>.

^{viii} Brianna Sacks, “FEMA employees put on leave after criticizing Trump administration in open letter,” August 26, 2025, *The Washington Post*, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2025/08/26/fema-employees-leave-trump-administration-letter/>. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2025/08/26/fema-employees-leave-trump-administration-letter/> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2025/08/26/fema-employees-leave-trump-administration-letter/>