

The Virgin Islands Consortium

FEMA Denies Government's Request For Extension Of 100 Percent Cost Share For Important Hurricane Recover-Related Programs; Plaskett Protests Decision

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Ernice Gilbert **December 12, 2018**



The Federal Emergency Management Agency has rejected the territory's request to extend the cost share for the Sheltering and Temporary Essential Power (STEP) program, along with a request for an extension of the period of 100 percent federal funding for ongoing Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) mission assignments until they are completed.

"While we recognize that the U.S. Virgin Islands has been seriously impacted by Hurricanes Irma and Maria, it has been determined that further adjustments to the Public

Assistance cost share arrangement beyond what the President previously approved are not warranted, reads the FEMA letter, seen [here](#). "Therefore I must inform you that your requests are denied." The letter was written by FEMA Administrator Brock Long.

FEMA's decision to deny the local government's request stands to greatly impact the territory's ongoing recovery, even as the Bryan administration takes office in January. The 100 percent cost share proved essential in assuring the territory's rebuild following the 2017 storms, as the local government lacks the funding to harden the territory's infrastructure. During a Wednesday night interview on The Virgin Islands Political Consortium (V.I.P.C.) last week, Governor-elect Albert Bryan told The Consortium that while the government had funding to meet its obligations through December, the government's financial condition was "bad."

"We're bad," [he said](#), "We're solid through December, but come January when all these raises kick in, we're going to have to work hard to make sure that we're balancing the funds."

Following the federal government's response, Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett [wrote](#) to Mr. Long requesting that FEMA reconsiders its position. She also issued a statement on the matter.

"Today I sent a letter to FEMA expressing my disappointment in their decision to deny the request from the governor to extend the 100 percent federal cost share through November 30 and permanently for Army Corp Assignments. On numerous occasions I have asked officials about extending the 100 percent cost share portion based on clear statutory authority given to FEMA Administrator by Congress. My letter urges Administrator Brock Long to reconsider his decision," Ms. Plaskett said in a statement

"The federal government has underfunded the territories in numerous areas and placed arbitrary caps on its access to federal programs. This waiver extension is greatly needed to keep the territory from spending tens of millions of dollars that it does not have and diverts funds that it desperately needs for other areas. The decision to deny the request of the Governor for the waiver of the cost share diminishes our ability to fully realize the goal of rebuilding our critical infrastructure in a more resilient manner," the delegate added.

Mr. Bryan is currently in Washington meeting with Congress and Trump administration officials. During a press conference held in Washington on Tuesday, Ms. Plaskett and Mr. Bryan vowed to collaborate in ensuring that the territory continues to receive federal dollars.