



**One Hundred Seventeenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515**

August 11, 2021

The Honorable Tate Reeves
Governor
State of Mississippi
550 High Street
Sillers Building, 19th Floor
Jackson, MS 39201

Mr. Stephen C. McCraney
Executive Director
Mississippi Emergency Management Agency
P.O. Box 5644
Pearl, MS 39208

Dear Governor Reeves and Director McCraney:

I am writing about the State of Mississippi's failure to adequately engage the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regarding Federal assistance for flooding and resulting damage in the Mississippi Delta from June 8-11, 2021.¹

The June storms that deluged my district had significant impacts on my constituents. The flooding devastated more than 20 Mississippi counties, damaging over 500 homes and 250 public roads and buildings.² In excess of 20 inches of rain fell in one affected county. A National Weather Service meteorologist observed, "Over 7 inches of rain in one day should only happen once every 200 years. To have it happen twice in two days is just incredible."³

Despite the extensive damage, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) concluded that the flooding did "not meet FEMA parameters to request relief."⁴ This conclusion was reached without the benefit of having joint preliminary damage assessments (PDAs) carried out in partnership with FEMA, as is commonly done by States after disaster strikes. Given the extent of the damage, the State of Mississippi's decision to forgo joint PDAs to determine the

¹ Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, *North Mississippi Flash Flooding Update*, [www.msema.org](https://www.msema.org/news/north-mississippi-flash-flooding-update/), <https://www.msema.org/news/north-mississippi-flash-flooding-update/> (Jul. 13, 2021).

² Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, *North Mississippi Flood Event June 2021 Damage Report #3*, [www.msema.org](https://www.msema.org/news/north-mississippi-flood-event-june-2021-damage-report-3/), <https://www.msema.org/news/north-mississippi-flood-event-june-2021-damage-report-3/> (Jun. 17, 2021).

³ Brian Broom, *Over 20 inches of rain: Flooding forces rescues, washes out roads in North Mississippi*, Clarion Ledger, <https://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/2021/06/10/heavy-rain-north-mississippi-flooding-homes-rescues/7635484002/> (Jun. 10, 2021 1:51 PM).

⁴ Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, *North Mississippi Flash Flooding Update*, [www.msema.org](https://www.msema.org/news/north-mississippi-flash-flooding-update/), <https://www.msema.org/news/north-mississippi-flash-flooding-update/> (Jul. 13, 2021).

magnitude and impact of this disaster – and instead make a unilateral determination about requesting FEMA assistance – is troubling. Our Federal disaster system is built on collaboration and partnership and presumes that State leaders will exhaust all avenues to help communities recover. In this case, the State of Mississippi appears to have continued a pattern of failing to avail itself of assistance from the Federal government – to the detriment of Mississippians.

To better understand the circumstances surrounding this matter, please provide the following information by August 25, 2021:

- 1) any document, guidance, or criteria the State relied on to determine whether to request FEMA's participation in conducting joint PDAs for the June 8-11 flooding;
- 2) a copy of any damage assessments MEMA conducted regarding this flooding; and
- 3) details on any circumstances when MEMA requested joint PDAs with FEMA in the last five years.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson
Chairman

cc: The Honorable Deanne Criswell
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency

Ms. Gracia B. Szczech
Regional Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency Region IV