

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20515

February 18, 2021

The Honorable Bob Fenton  
Senior Official Performing the Duties of FEMA Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C Street, SW, 8th Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Mr. Fenton:

We write to urge the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to quickly approve the request from Texas for a major disaster declaration for communities affected by the extreme winter weather and subsequent mass power and water outages of February 11, 2021 to February 18, 2021. We appreciate President Biden's Emergency Declaration for the State of Texas on February 14, 2021 to provide federal emergency aid and coordination of disaster relief efforts in the affected regions. In particular, the arrival of generators, water, blankets, and diesel will keep our hospitals and critical infrastructure running when they are needed most.

As members of the Texas Congressional Delegation, we will do all we can at a federal level to make sure a failure like this does not happen again. But we look to FEMA to help us recover from this disaster in the weeks and months to come. Although we expect the extreme winter temperatures to wane, the long-term damage to our homes, businesses, municipal services and infrastructure, energy infrastructure, and agricultural and food systems cannot be overstated.

Much of this damage will be exacerbated by a simultaneous economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic that has already challenged local industries and governments. Many grocery stores have remained closed because they lack power while those that have stayed open have seen food shortages. In the Rio Grande Valley, citrus and vegetable farmers anticipate massive losses and throughout the state, dairy farmers have had to throw out \$8 million worth of milk per day.

Winter weather also has brought physical damage to our infrastructure, including power lines, leaving many customers without power for days to come, even though others' power has been restored. As power is restored and temperatures rise, additional water damage to homes and businesses is anticipated. For those with flooded homes and collapsed ceilings as a result of pipes bursting and for those with fire and smoke damage from their attempts to stay warm, recovery will take even longer. Even access to clean drinking water is at risk as local water systems must be tested for bacteria to remove boil-water notices, which are in place in 680 water systems statewide.

We therefore urge FEMA to support any requests for expedited assistance without a full field damage assessment. FEMA should be prepared to work with the State of Texas and be as flexible as possible should the state submit an expedited request for disaster assistance for the communities impacted by this winter weather and power outage.

As these conditions continue, federal assistance from FEMA will be vital in ensuring that communities are able to repair damage and undertake crucial mitigation work. We appreciate your attention to this matter and to our request to support any requests from the state for disaster assistance.

Sincerely,



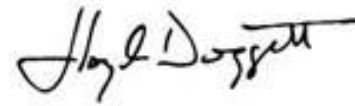
Lizzie Fletcher  
Member of Congress



Henry Cuellar  
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Marc Veasey  
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Lloyd Doggett  
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Filemon Vela  
Member of Congress



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