

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 26, 2017

Administrator Brock Long  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C Street SW  
Washington, DC 20472

Lieutenant General Todd T. Semonite  
Army Corps of Engineers  
441 G Street NW  
Washington, DC 20314

Dear Administrator Long and Lieutenant General Todd T. Semonite:

We write to express our serious concern with the on-going power restoration efforts in Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands (USVI). The continued significant power outages throughout Puerto Rico and the USVI pose a serious threat to public health and safety.

We are committed to the long-term rebuilding of the power grid in a way that is more resilient to extreme weather events and integrates technologies like microgrids, renewable energy, and distributed energy resources. But, we understand the primary federal focus must be the immediate restoration of power, not only for homes, hospitals, and other services but also for critical power-dependent infrastructure like drinking water and sewage treatment systems.

To help address this issue we have a number of specific requests, particularly with respect to Puerto Rico, outlined below:

### **Incident Commander & Coordination:**

As of today, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA) have separately contracted with several companies for electric grid restoration work in Puerto Rico. While we remain concerned about the structure of some of these contracts and we intend to review them and the length of time it's taken to issue the awards, we must simultaneously use appropriate means to deploy all available resources to aid in this effort as quickly as possible.

We are particularly concerned with the lack of a unified command for electric grid restoration to ensure that resources are properly and quickly utilized, that specific tasks are appropriately prioritized, and that efforts are not duplicative. **Therefore, we urge both of your agencies, in conjunction with PREPA, to establish a clear chain of command and identify a responsible official to oversee all contracts and coordinate with local officials so that work will be as efficient and effective as possible.** This official should be in charge of marshalling all available resources in the power restoration effort including ensuring the effective deployment of the logistical capabilities of the USACE, and the equipment, crew, and materials capabilities of private contractors and other public utilities.

While coordinating the power restoration effort is critical, we also ask that you play a more active role in coordinating with other federal agencies working on the recovery efforts. For example, if through the course of your efforts you discover that additional or amended mission

assignments from FEMA to the USACE would be helpful, then we urge both of your agencies to request those in a timely fashion. Furthermore, while coordination with private contractors and PREPA is important, USACE and FEMA should simultaneously be working closely with the Department of Energy's Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability to ensure that every federal resource and all relevant technical expertise available is deployed to aid in this effort. We simply cannot afford to allow bureaucracy, jurisdictional issues, or other similar challenges to delay power restoration efforts.

**Teams, Materials, & Equipment:**

It is our understanding that the USACE has contracted with PowerSecure and Fluor to help lead a number of restoration projects in Puerto Rico. Unfortunately, initial reports indicate, notwithstanding the assessment crews currently on the ground that the vast majority of crews and materials from these two companies to begin major repair work will not arrive in Puerto Rico until the first week of November at the earliest, which is simply unacceptable. Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico on September 20, over 40 days before major power restoration projects under these contracts would be set to begin and 32 days since USACE received its initial mission assignment from FEMA. **In order to help advance this timeline, we urge USACE and FEMA to clear crews from Fluor and PowerSecure to begin work as soon as possible.** Further delay only further jeopardizes the health and safety of the residents of Puerto Rico.

In addition to immediately issuing a notice to proceed to Fluor and PowerSecure, we also strongly encourage you to establish basecamps on Puerto Rico that could then be used by additional utility crews. We have received confirmation from a number of electric utilities, including members of the American Public Power Association (APPA) and the Edison Electric Institute (EEI), that they are eager to send crews to aid in the grid repair and restoration efforts. However, in order to facilitate that process those crews will need camps with running water, food, and shelter and **therefore we urge USACE to work with the appropriate entities to quickly establish camps that could be used by these additional crews. In addition, once the camps are established, we urge you to coordinate with PREPA to activate additional assistance via mutual aid agreements, existing contracting vehicles, and other expedited processes that will ensure the maximum number of crews necessary are aiding in this effort.**

Power restoration in Puerto Rico is of paramount importance and this effort is going to take an all-hands-on-deck approach. The USACE should leave no stone unturned in the solicitation of additional equipment, personnel, and assistance in this project. **Furthermore, the USACE and FEMA should work together and in coordination with the governor and other local officials to ensure the expeditious vetting and clearance of crews, materials, and equipment so that they can be transported to Puerto Rico as quickly as possible, including by air if necessary.** Reports that crews and equipment ready to help in the recovery process are being delayed at ports and airports is simply unacceptable and must be addressed immediately. We are ready to assist you in overcoming any of these potential obstacles.

**Long-Term Recovery:**

In the coming weeks, we also intend to seek your assistance to ensure the electric grid is rebuilt in a more resilient way, with more distributed energy resources that rely on solar and wind power and microgrids, a transition away from reliance on fossil fuel imports, and a strong independent regulatory body that can ensure accountability and lower rates for consumers. **We urge you to work with other relevant federal agencies to submit specific legislative language requests to Congress for the next disaster supplemental appropriations bill, given that additional authorities will be necessary in order to rebuild a more resilient grid in Puerto Rico and USVI.** In the near term, we expect that immediate repairs to the power grid will be made in accordance with the current codes and standards, as required by law. We look forward to partnering with locals in Puerto Rico and the USVI, the USACE, FEMA, and others in this important effort.

While we understand that the effort to restore power in Puerto Rico and the USVI is a monumental task, it's also one which we cannot afford to further delay. We appreciate your attention to these matters as well as your efforts to address other recovery issues throughout the country, including on-going work in Texas and Florida.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator



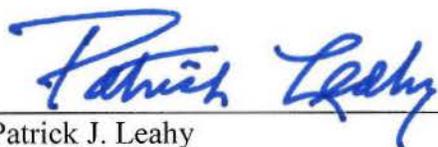
Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senator



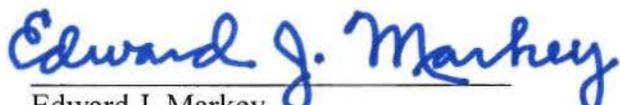
Patrick J. Leahy  
United States Senator

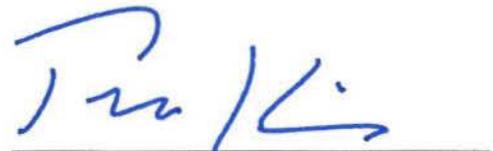


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Edward J. Markey  
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Brian Schatz  
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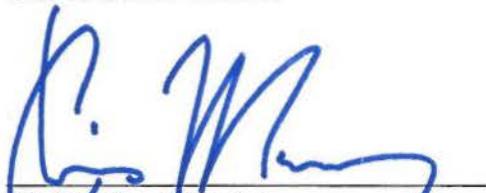
  
Margaret Wood Hassan  
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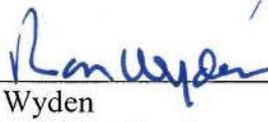
  
Tom Udall  
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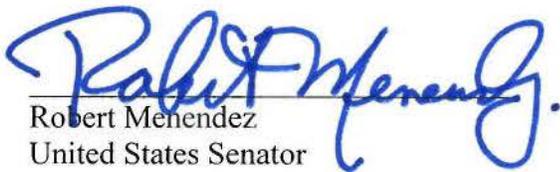
  
Dianne Feinstein  
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Bernard Sanders  
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Michael F. Bennet  
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Kirsten Gillibrand  
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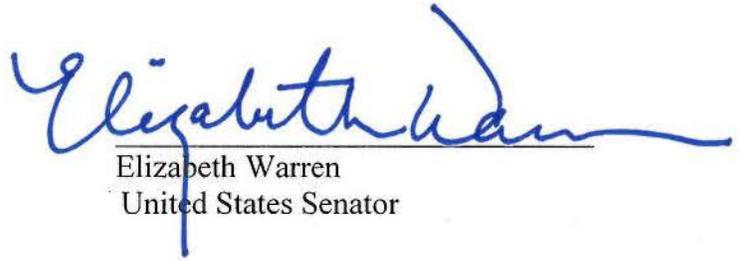
  
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United States Senator

  
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Kamala D. Harris  
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Chris Van Hollen  
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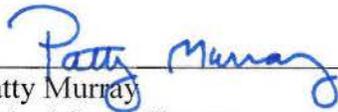
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