

DUNCAN HUNTER
52D DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

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TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0552

223 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-0552
(202) 225-5672
FAX: (202) 225-0235

1870 CORDELL COURT, #206
EL CAJON, CA 92020
(619) 448-5201
FAX: (619) 449-2251

May 26, 2011

Mr. William Craig Fugate
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management
P.O. Box 10055
Hyattsville, MD 20782-8055

Dear Administrator Fugate:

In 2003 and 2007, fires devastated thousands of homes in San Diego County. Recently, many of these homeowners have been contacted by the Federal Emergency and Management Agency (FEMA) for repayment of funds that FEMA improperly paid to them.

While I appreciate the need recover improper payments due to fraud, I am concerned about a process that goes after citizens without timely notice or sufficient time to deal with an error, made not by them, but by FEMA. In San Diego, 37 individuals have received a "notice of debt" letter from FEMA. One family has been told it owes FEMA nearly \$1,600 and was given only 30 days to pay in full. As you know, an appeal can be filed; however, interest begins accruing on the debt only 30 days after the citizen receives the "notice of debt." It seems inherently unfair that, particularly in this case, four years after a home was destroyed, that a family only has 30 days to repay a debt they did not know that they had and interest will accumulate. If allowed, I urge FEMA to waive interest payments on this debt as these individuals did not seek to incur a debt placed on them through mistakes by FEMA.

In addition, I believe that the appeal process should be expedited and that priority should be given during the appeal process to the arguments put forth by the individual. It is my understanding that the cases in San Diego do not involve instances of fraud and, therefore, the fact that individuals acted in good faith in dealing with the federal government should take precedence over the ineptitude of the federal government.

In closing, these disaster survivors have gone through a traumatic and financially draining event. Many of them are still in a financial crisis. Waiving interest payments, expediting the appeal process and giving preference to the arguments of the individual would make the process far more fair and allow the disaster survivor to have a stronger voice in the process.

I look forward to hearing from you on this very important matter.

With warm regards.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Duncan Hunter", written over a large, stylized blue scribble.

Duncan Hunter
Member of Congress