

February 4, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

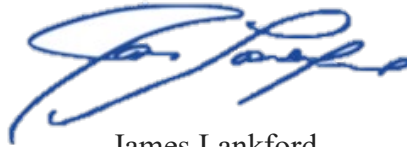
I write to commend your recent Executive Order establishing the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Review Council. The current federal framework for responding to disasters is insufficient, and major reforms are necessary to ensure Americans are best supported in times of need. As the Council engages with leaders to discuss potential reforms, I respectfully request that the Council consider the following:

1. Reforming FEMA's responsibilities and/or consolidating the federal disaster framework more generally. FEMA has two core responsibilities: managing security grants and serving as the leading agency for federal disaster relief. While both roles can be vested in a single agency, I am concerned that FEMA's dual responsibilities are hampering its emergency response capabilities. At the same time, the current federal disaster framework involves too many agencies with a variety of other, non-emergency response duties, including the U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Small Business Administration, and the Environmental Protection Agency, among several others. I ask that your Council consider whether more federal emergency response capabilities should be consolidated under FEMA, which would reduce the number of agencies constituents need to work through when seeking federal disaster assistance, and whether other, current responsibilities should be placed elsewhere.
2. Reassessing the federal government's role in disasters. Under current law, the default federal assistance for major disasters is 75%, with opportunities to increase the federal cost share. The federal cost share is often increased to 100%. It is paramount that all levels of government involved in emergency response and recovery have skin in the game. I urge the Council to consider the benefits and drawbacks of a sliding cost share that begins at a lower percentage for federal support but can be increased based on the needs and capacity of the community in question. I also urge the Council to consider recommending how to limit ad hoc federal cost share increases and eliminate the possibility of a 100% federal cost share as it relates to FEMA's disaster aid.
3. Conducting an in-depth review of all federally funded disaster activities conducted by FEMA. The federal government's labyrinthine disaster response and recovery programs have not been subject to the scrutiny needed to assess whether it is achieving its goals or whether its funding would be better spent with limited strings attached at the state and local levels. I ask that the Council provide a comprehensive analysis of these programs and make a formal, performance-based recommendation on how the funding for these programs should be spent.
4. Exploring ways to speed up FEMA-led disaster projects. Federal funding for disaster relief comes with countless conditions, many of which unnecessarily prolong the duration of projects. I urge the Council

to assess whether conditions on federal disaster aid, including conditions such as Environmental and Historic Preservation (EHP) reviews, harm the disaster recovery process for communities.

Lastly, it is essential that the Council solicit feedback from leaders with substantial knowledge of disaster recovery efforts. Oklahoma is no stranger to natural disasters, and we are often forced to grapple with the ensuing wreckage and trauma. Despite these challenges, Oklahomans have consistently risen above the fray to help one another in recovery. Given our experience with natural disasters, I respectfully request that the Council solicit feedback from emergency management leaders in Oklahoma.

In God We Trust,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James Lankford". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "L".

James Lankford
United States Senator

Cc: Secretary Noem