

# Duckworth and Durbin call on Congress to immediately provide disaster assistance for Puerto Rico & U.S. Virgin Islands

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Dick Durbin (D-IL) joined 9 of their colleagues in [writing](#) to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Speaker of the House of Representatives Paul Ryan urging them to take immediate action on disaster relief legislation for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, which are home to more than 3.5 million U.S. citizens, to help them recover from the devastation caused by Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria. Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands have been severely damaged in recent weeks by some of the most powerful hurricanes to affect the region in recorded history and are in dire need of immediate assistance. Disaster relief legislation could build on the efforts of the Illinois Air National Guard, which has deployed a team to provide telecommunication assistance, food, water, tents and cots to Puerto Rico. Illinois has the 7<sup>th</sup> largest population of Puerto Ricans in the United States, with more than 200,000 residents of



Puerto Rican heritage.

“These storms have been some of the most powerful hurricanes in recorded history to affect the region, leaving thousands of families homeless, causing catastrophic damage to critical infrastructure, and leaving much of their population without power for an indefinite period of time,” wrote the Senators in their [letter](#). “As members of Congress, we have an obligation to ensure all citizens of the United States affected by natural disasters have sufficient resources to recover. Congress can and should come together to help our fellow Americans recover just like it has in past disasters. Without this crucial funding, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Island’s schools, businesses, and critical infrastructure will be left vulnerable to further deterioration, only prolonging an already challenging road to recovery and adding to human suffering.”

The Senators requested Senate and House leadership immediately bring to a vote legislation to fund disaster relief programs like FEMA’s Disaster Relief Fund and Community Development Block Grants for Disaster Recovery, which help rebuild homes, provide temporary housing, and repair vital infrastructure.