



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## Regional lawmakers again urge Governor Hochul to provide state flood relief aid to Steuben County flood victims: FEMA denies Hochul appeal on Individual Assistance, local lawmakers urge state to step in

THOMAS F. O'MARA January 19, 2022

| ISSUE: **FLOOD RELIEF**



New York State has delivered aid for hard-hit communities in the recent past. It's the right thing to do, the state clearly has the resources to do it, and we hope you will respond in kind for our communities now.

**Corning, N.Y., January 19**—In the wake of yet another denial by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide federal aid to individual local flooding victims, State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats), Assemblywoman Marjorie Byrnes (R,C-Caledonia), Assemblyman Joe Giglio (R,C-Olean), and Assemblyman Phil Palmesano (R,C,I-Corning) today once again called on New York Governor Kathy Hochul to immediately respond with badly needed state financial assistance.

In a joint statement, O'Mara, Byrnes, Giglio and Palmesano said, "At a time when the federal government is working to distribute trillions of dollars of federal aid for nearly everything under the sun, it's hard to understand FEMA's continued denial of Individual Assistance to help hard-hit Steuben County flooding victims recover and rebuild. It makes no sense, it's wrong, and while we have worked closely with the Hochul administration to try to do everything possible to get it reversed, now it's time for New York State to act. Families in Steuben County have been devastated and it's unconscionable that our federal government would simply decide to turn its collective back and say 'tough luck.' It's up to the state now to stand up, say 'help is on the way,' and provide the assistance that's needed."

FEMA initially denied Individual Assistance last September and, in a September 22, 2021 letter to the governor (see attached copy of letter above), the area legislators called on Hochul to provide state assistance. At that time, Hochul immediately appealed the FEMA decision and began working with the local representatives to try to overturn it.

This week, however, FEMA rejected the state's appeal.

In its denial, FEMA stated, "After thorough review of all the information contained in your initial request and appeal, we affirm our original findings that the impact to the individuals and households from this event was not of such severity and magnitude to warrant the designation of the Individual Assistance program under FEMA-4625-DR. Therefore, your

appeal for Individual Assistance is denied.”

In a letter yesterday (see attached copy of letter above) to Hochul following up on their correspondence to the governor last September, the area lawmakers once again called on the governor to immediately provide direct state assistance to Steuben County flooding victims. Specifically, they asked the governor to:

- > authorize the state to fully assume the 12.5-percent local share of disaster-related costs; and
- > provide direct state grants of \$10,000-\$25,000 help cover the costs of repairing and rebuilding for homeowners, and grants of \$25,000-\$50,000 for businesses.

In yesterday’s letter, O’Mara, Byrnes, Giglio, and Palmesano stressed that the state has provided this type of assistance to flooding victims in recent years following severe storms.

They wrote, “We also know that you are well aware, especially from your past experience as a local leader, how this type of historic flooding that destroys homes, businesses, personal property, roads, bridges, culverts, and other local infrastructure – not to mention the agricultural and environmental impacts -- places enormous strain and stress on local communities, governments, individuals and families, farmers, and property taxpayers. Consequently – especially in light of FEMA’s continued denial of Individual Assistance -- we once again urge you to immediately make direct state aid and other assistance available to individual homeowners, businesses, farms, and the municipalities themselves. New York State has delivered aid for hard-hit communities in the recent past. It’s the right thing to do, the state clearly has the resources to do it, and we hope you will respond in kind for our communities now.”