

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ

7TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

September 8, 2017

The Honorable Rick Perry
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Perry:

As you know Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands experienced significant impact from Hurricane Irma. Categorized as a Hurricane 5 on the Saffir-Sampson hurricane wind scale, with winds up to 185 mph, Hurricane Irma is one of the strongest hurricanes recorded in the Atlantic basin. The Federal Government must ensure that it is helping our fellow citizens swiftly recover from harm resulting from the storm.

Puerto Rico faces unique challenges given its financial condition and the state of its infrastructure. Its energy grid has faced years of neglect and is acutely vulnerable to damage from a natural disaster. Just last year, technical failures at the Aguirre power plant left one-third of the population without power. In August 2017 alone, inclement weather caused power outages for over 40 thousand people. It is reported that, following Irma, over 1 million Puerto Ricans are currently without power.

While it is too early to fully assess when electrical service will be fully restored, ahead of the storm, the Executive Director for the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA), Ricardo Ramos Rodríguez, indicated that the Island could potentially face up to **four to six months** without power. The Department you lead can play a crucial role in helping Puerto Rico's energy infrastructure recover.

In that regard, I ask that the U.S. Department of Energy:

- 1) Expeditiously mobilize existing resources and experts to provide Puerto Rico with an accurate assessment of damages and an energy emergency response center;
- 2) Provide Puerto Rico the technical assistance they need to address service disruptions and ensure that power outages do not further constrain the Island's capacity to recover;
- 3) Partner with the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) through either a specialized taskforce, a Memorandum of Understanding, or other appropriate mechanisms to ensure that Puerto Rico's electrical infrastructure is back up and running as quickly as possible.

I thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. Please feel free to contact me directly or my staff at 202-225-2361 with any questions.

I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

cc:

William B. "Brock" Long
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C St SW
Washington, DC
20024