

Congress of the United States
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Small Business
2361 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6315

June 15, 2018

The Honorable William "Brock" Long
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C St. S.W.
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Administrator Long:

I am writing to ask that the deadlines be extended for physical property damage disaster and economic injury disaster loans, respectively June 18 and June 20, for those affected by Hurricane Maria. The natural disaster in the Caribbean created one of the most devastating hardships in the history of the region and has caused harm to millions of homeowners and small businesses in Puerto Rico. The rebuilding of the region will involve a private and public partnership to ensure the local economies start creating jobs and generating business income.

Sadly, the area is still struggling in its recovery efforts and the reality is many inhabitants in Puerto Rico are unprepared for another hurricane season already underway. Reports from the area show that the economy is struggling to recover due to a number of factors. Delayed damage assessment and infrastructure deployment has left many unable to access the outreach provided by the Small Business Administration (SBA). Additionally, with many parts of the Island still without power and telecommunications, residents require more time to file disaster loan applications.

The deadlines for both physical and economic injury loans are just days away and residents need your support. Considering the difficulties persisting in Puerto Rico, the deadlines must be extended to ensure that those survivors who are eligible for assistance will be able to apply for it. Such an extension will provide these individuals with the ability to meet the paperwork requirements, assess their losses, and determine business viability. It will also allow for applicants who have not heard back from the SBA to re-apply or determine whether the SBA loan is even in the system.

The SBA disaster loan program was created so that local economies could recover quickly from these disasters in a timely and efficient manner. It has helped communities get back on their feet while at the same time ensuring an efficient use of taxpayer's dollars in a recovery effort. With all the obstacles that those in the region have faced, everything should be done to avoid creating unnecessary hardships that will only hinder recovery efforts.

The ability of the federal government's SBA disaster loan program for home and business loans to operate as intended relies on the cooperation of all federal partners, especially the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). I understand that application periods for disaster relief under the Small Business Act must correspond with deadlines set forth under the Stafford Act and for that reason, I strongly urge you to extend the current registration deadlines for an additional 90 days.

I appreciate your ongoing efforts and prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Nydia M. Velázquez
Ranking Member
House Committee on Small Business