

STACEY E. PLASKETT
VIRGIN ISLANDS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

2404 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BDG
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

January 17, 2019

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

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of my constituents, I write in strong opposition to any attempts to divert disaster funding for border wall construction. Reports indicate that you are considering a declaration of national emergency in order to divert unobligated disaster funding from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) for construction of your proposed border wall. Diverting these funds will be to the detriment of the communities that are still reeling from the devastation of multiple natural disasters. Any such action will create a national risk to these communities whose infrastructure and economy were severely comprised by the impact of these disasters.

As you are aware, in September 2017, Hurricanes Irma and Maria - two consecutive Category 5 hurricanes - significantly impacted the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI), destroying the islands' infrastructure and its only two hospitals, and leaving residents without electricity for months. Total damage in the USVI has been estimated at \$10.8 billion: \$6.9 billion to infrastructure, \$2.3 billion to housing and \$1.5 million to the economy. Disaster funding from the ACOE is critical to disaster recovery, including power restoration, repairs, studies and projects in the territories and states impacted by natural disasters. Virgin Islanders are still without roofs and the process to rebuild our public schools and hospitals have yet to begin. Diverting disaster funds from these communities would create security risks and make them even more vulnerable.

While 800,000 federal workers have missed paychecks, Virgin Islanders are at risk of losing access to food and healthcare, travelers face extended delays in airports which negatively impacts our tourism, and there are numerous other federal services essential to individual and national security that are put at risk. Disaster funds are crucial to our recovery and any diversion of such funds would be counterproductive to these efforts. The impact of the continued government shutdown will only worsen as time goes on. It is not only federal employees affected, but also beneficiaries of programs such as food stamps, farmers seeking loans, and businesses that rely on federal workers for continued success.

The Democratic led House has passed numerous bills in the last weeks to reopen the government and begin meaningful discussions on border security. The U.S. territories are extended borders for the mainland. Without adequate funding, our border security in the Caribbean will be compromised. I strongly urge that you reject any proposal presented to divert disaster funding for border wall construction.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and I look forward to working on a solution to reopening the federal government and supporting the economic viability and opportunity for all Americans.

Sincerely,


Stacey E. Plaskett
Member of Congress