

THE NAVAJO NATION



BEN SHELLY PRESIDENT  
REX LEE JIM VICE PRESIDENT

June 20, 2012

The Honorable Sens. Joseph Lieberman and Susan Collins  
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Lieberman and Ranking Member Collins,

I am writing in support of S 2283, which amends the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, and urge immediate action on the bill. The provisions of this bill, and the similar provisions in HR 2903, are important for their recognition of tribes as more than local governments, and for their potential to save lives and property.

The federal government is committed to a government-to-government relationship with the Navajo Nation as a distinct political entity. Consistent with this status, the Navajo Nation should be treated in parity with states and territories under federal disaster response laws. Our current dependency on one or more states to make a request for a federal declaration, and marshal the resources that such a declaration can bring, is inconsistent with our status as a distinct and sovereign political entity, and risks delays in the deployment of measures to protect the lives and property of our citizens.

The proposed Stafford Act amendments, providing for direct requests for declarations of emergencies and major disasters from tribes to the president, create important tools for the Navajo Nation to save lives and property through rapid responses, in partnership with the federal government, to emergencies and major disasters.

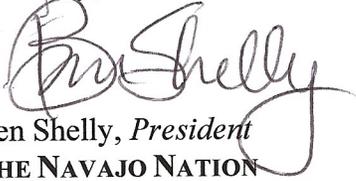
The Navajo Nation governs a vast area larger than 10 states; its territory overlapping with the boundaries of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah.

Our territory's size, overlapping political boundaries, rural population, and a limited transportation infrastructure, present unique challenges when responding to emergencies and major disasters, including a dependency on each of the states bordering our territory to make requests for federal declarations.

The Navajo Nation coordinates responses to emergencies and major disasters through its own emergency management infrastructure. It is ready to partner with the federal government independent of state governments.

I respectfully urge you to act swiftly on S 2283, and facilitate our ability to both protect Navajo citizens and their property, and to govern our territory in a manner consistent with the Navajo Nation's distinct political status.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ben Shelly". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Ben Shelly, *President*  
**THE NAVAJO NATION**