



CHITIMACHA
TRIBE OF LOUISIANA

July 17, 2012

Honorable Senators 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. We are requesting immediate action on the bill. The provisions of this bill and similar provisions in HR 2903 are vitally important for their recognition of Tribes as more than local governments and for their potential to save lives and property in the face of disasters.

The Federal Government is committed to Government-to-Government relationship with The Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana as a distinct political entity. As a result of this status, The Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana should be treated in parity with the states and territories under Federal Disaster Response Laws. Our current dependency on the State of Louisiana to make a request for a Federal Emergency Disaster Declaration, and implement the resources that such a declaration brings, is inconsistent with our status as a distinct and sovereign political entity. This creates a risk of delays in the deployment of protective and supportive measures for our citizens and our property.

The proposed Stafford Act Amendments, which provide for direct requests for declarations of emergencies and major disasters from the Tribes to the President, will create and make available important tools for The Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana, in partnership with the Federal government, to preserve lives and property through rapid intervention during and following major disasters.

The Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana is located in South Louisiana approximately 15 miles from the Gulf of Mexico. The Reservation is directly in the path of that area known as "Hurricane Alley". We have a history of surviving many major storms that have historically plagued this area. Over the years we have become better at preparing our people and property for the devastation of these events. The Chitimacha Tribe coordinates its efforts with the Parish Office of Homeland Security located in Franklin, LA. However, because of the overwhelming area that this office is responsible for, the Tribe makes its own preparations for events. The majority of our requests are responded to by the DOI, BIA, Army Corps of Engineers, Parish Homeland Security and IHS agencies. The Tribe often times gets cut off from other areas of the Parish and has to be self-sufficient to survive. We also respond to the needs of those non-native families that live near the Reservation who are also cut off from assistance from the Parish.

The Tribe could not operate its Emergency Operations System during emergencies if we did not have help from the aforementioned agencies. These individuals have been extremely helpful in the past.

I am respectfully requesting that you act quickly on S 2283, and facilitate our ability to protect our Chitimacha Citizens and their property, and to govern and control our territory in a manner consistent with the Chitimacha Tribe's distinct political status.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Paul Darden". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

John Paul Darden
Chairman