

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3201

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September 18, 2003

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House

VIA FAX

Dear Mr. President:

I write to ask you to quickly approve Governor Easley's request for a federal disaster declaration in response to Hurricane Isabel. As you know, this devastating storm has made landfall and although damage assessments are ongoing, it is clear that the state will require federal assistance.

North Carolinians are accustomed to dealing with a hurricane's aftermath. State and local officials were prepared for Isabel — communities all across the storm's predicted path worked together to board up homes and secure buildings. Governor Easley coordinated an orderly evacuation and pre-positioned the National Guard to ensure a quick response to the storm.

Early reports indicate that at least 26 counties will suffer major damage. Nearly 6,000 residents are in shelters, hundreds of homes have been damaged, thousands have lost power and telephone service and dunes that protect our fragile coastline have been eroded.

Federal officials are already in North Carolina, and as you know, the next crucial step is for you to declare the impacted areas a federal disaster. A disaster declaration will make available federal assistance and enable North Carolinians to receive individual assistance grants that will be crucial in the first few hours following the storm. A disaster declaration will also give local officials the assurance that the federal government will assist them with the cost of debris removal and building repair.

I appreciate your attention to this crisis. Your swift action will help thousands of North Carolinians begin the slow recovery process.

Yours sincerely,



John Edwards