



RICK SCOTT
GOVERNOR

June 5, 2013

The Honorable Marco Rubio
United States Senator
716 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bill Nelson
United States Senator
716 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Rubio and Nelson:

Now that we are officially in the 2013 Hurricane Season, the threat posed to our state's emergency readiness and response capabilities because of President Obama's budget sequestration cuts to our National Guard deserve immediate attention and action.

When the budget sequestration process began, the National Guard asked to present the U.S. Department of Defense with their requested savings without cutting the pay of Guardsmen, and therefore putting our emergency response abilities in jeopardy. Unfortunately, the Department of Defense instead chose to make cuts to Guardsmen salaries through furloughs. The Guard then requested that the required furloughs be conducted outside our hurricane season, which runs from June 1st to November 30th each year. Again, the Department of Defense rejected this request and demanded that the Guard be cut through reductions to Guardsmen salaries at the height of hurricane season, from July until September. The salary cuts will amount to an expected 20 percent pay loss for Guardsmen families, and even more devastatingly, weaken our state's ability to immediately respond to a hurricane or other disaster.

The Department of Defense's forced furloughs of our Guardsmen will impact about 50 percent of our fulltime force – straining personnel and resources, including aircraft, critical to preventing the loss of life or property in the event of a disaster. Additionally, because the cuts to Guardsmen will reduce our force, the Florida National Guard now estimates they will need at least two additional days of mobilization to ensure the maintenance, safety and function of aircraft and other equipment before a storm makes landfall. Simply, this means that our state's timetable for prepositioning resources and supplies must be significantly altered – at an even greater cost to the state, to say nothing of the impact on public safety.

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As you know, before a Presidential Disaster Declaration is granted under the Stafford Act during a hurricane, our state must cover emergency preparation efforts through our State Emergency Response Fund (SERF). An additional two days added to our preparedness timeline means that state tax dollars in our SERF fund will be greatly strained, especially if the 2013 hurricane season produces four major hurricanes, like Florida's 2004 hurricane season. Therefore, these forced cuts to Guardsmen not only immediately result in lost income for Florida Guard families, they also force the state to spend state tax dollars to make up for days of emergency functions, which could have been avoided if not for the Department of Defense cuts.

As Florida's U.S. Senators and protectors of state and national defense functions, I respectfully request that you act on this matter immediately by calling on the Office of Management and Budget and the U.S. Department of Defense to restore funding cut from the National Guard and remove this imminent threat to Florida's emergency response functions during hurricane season. The National Guard previously offered to produce savings through reductions in other areas that do not affect personnel and readiness. I am also offering the assistance of our state's budget experts to guide the Department of Defense in reducing costs in ways that do not risk the safety of our residents, or the further expense of our taxpayers, at the height of hurricane season. The state of Florida is prepared to assist you in any way we can as you fight for us at the federal level.

I thank you again for your immediate attention and would appreciate your quick response to this request, especially as each day moves us further into the 2013 hurricane season.

Sincerely,



Rick Scott
Governor