



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on August 27, 2011

Ron Paul Wants FEMA Out of Irene Relief

GOP Presidential candidate Ron Paul, for example, [contends](#) that there should be no FEMA response to Hurricane Irene and that federal disaster relief is “bad economics, bad morality, and bad constitutional law.”

“There’s no magic about FEMA. They’re a great contribution to deficit financing and quite frankly they don’t have a penny in the bank. We should be coordinated but coordinated voluntarily with the states. A state can decide. We don’t need somebody in Washington,” he said.



And there is more than enough evidence to support such a statement. According to two government reports [released](#) in 2009, FEMA’s emergency housing program, for example, was a massive waste of taxpayers’ money: “FEMA paid out nearly a third of a billion dollars over three years for temporary housing for displaced disaster victims of the 2005 hurricane season. These housing units were also declared by FEMA to be unsuitable for housing because of formaldehyde contamination and are awaiting disposal.”

In addition to that, it took FEMA six years to figure out that it [overpaid](#) and mistakenly awarded money to victims of Katrina, Rita, and Wilma \$600 million. MSNBC reported, “Up to 900,000 of the 2.5 million applicants who received aid under FEMA’s emergency cash assistance program—which included the \$2,000 debit cards given to evacuees—were based on duplicate or invalid Social Security numbers, or false addresses and names...Thousands of additional dollars appear to have been squandered on hotel rooms for evacuees that were paid at retail rather than the contractor’s lower estimated cost. They included \$438 rooms in New York City and beachfront condominiums in Panama City, Florida, at \$375 a night.”

Noting these various issues, Paul hopes to pre-empt similar problems in the wake of Irene. He claims, “We should be like 1900; we should be like 1940, 1950, 1960.”

There is historical evidence to support the notion that Americans were better off before the inception of programs like FEMA.

On February 16, 1887, President Glover Cleveland vetoed the “Texas Seed Bill”, a piece of legislation that would have helped suffering farmers in the American West. According to Cleveland, the Constitution did not appropriate any such powers to the federal government. Likewise, Cleveland believed the American spirit to be far more altruistic and generous than the federal government and felt



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assured that the American people would use the opportunity to exercise their charitable spirit.

In his veto, Cleveland wrote:

"The friendliness and charity of our countrymen can always be relied upon to relieve their fellow citizens in misfortune. This has been repeatedly and quite lately demonstrated. Federal aid in such cases encourages the expectation of paternal care on the part of the government and weakens the sturdiness of our national character, while it prevents the indulgence among our people of that kindly sentiment and conduct which strengthens the bonds of a common brotherhood."

Cleveland's sentiments were confirmed when private citizens donated ten times more to the Texas farmers than the amount legislated in the vetoed bill.

Paul is not the only outspoken critic of a federal response to natural disasters. House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, in discussions regarding earthquake aid to his own district in Virginia following the recent earthquake, [said](#), "There is an appropriate federal role in incidents like this....all of us know that the federal government is busy spending money it doesn't have."

Both lawmakers assert that the best protection for ones homes and contents is private insurance.

FEMA has consistently proven to have issues with accountability, management and oversight, all at the expense of the taxpayer.

Hurricane Katrina truly highlighted the [failures](#) of a federal emergency response program. Families were stranded for days on rooftops without food or water in New Orleans. Patients died as a result of a lack of medical supplies and somehow the agency failed to get supplies to those stranded at the Morial Convention Center, even as singer Harry Connick Jr. and other reporters managed to make it there.

Congressman Ron Paul asserts that programs like FEMA create "moral hazard," and ultimately turns people into sheep, incapable of making decisions for themselves. Paul explains, "Moral hazard, from whatever source, is detrimental because it removes the sense of responsibility for one's own actions...the whole notion of the safety net...[encourages] carelessness and dependence on the government to deal with any problems that come as a consequence of unwise economic or personal behavior."

For instance, following Hurricane Katrina, the [Seattle Times reported](#) that "Gov. Rick Perry was ... incensed at delays in sending cleanup crews to the rotting, city-size pile of waste."

Paul and other like-minded individuals recognize that it is inefficient for state governments to wait upon the federal government for assistance in matters such as these.

Likewise, the reason so many families were stranded in their homes during Hurricane Katrina is because they placed too much faith in the federal government. They waited for evacuation vehicles that never came, despite the "mandatory evacuation" orders that came down from officials in New Orleans.

And dealing with FEMA has proven to be a [bureaucratic nightmare](#). During Hurricane Rita, which slammed Texas in 2005, Galveston County Judge Jim Yarbrough bemoaned the process of extracting money from FEMA.

"Good Lord! The red tape and rules you have to go through to get anything done," Yarbrough said. "On Hurricane Ike, when we're putting out tens of millions, we can't afford a three-year reimbursement program. It would bankrupt most entities in this area if it takes that long."



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Similarly, Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal [complained](#) of the endless amounts of paperwork necessary to complete to receive assistance.

"The problem you've got with FEMA is that they're looking for reasons to say 'no,' " Jindal said. "While they've made progress since '05, there's such an emphasis on filling out paperwork. They need to have a focus on results."

Programs like FEMA are in direct violation to what the Founding Fathers envisioned when they created the American republic. In 1794, when Congress estimated \$15,000 for relief of French refugees who fled from San Domingo, James Madison stood on the House floor and declared, "I cannot undertake to lay my finger on that article of the Constitution which granted a right to Congress of expending, on objects of benevolence, the money of their constituents...Charity is no part of the legislative duty of the government."

It is that vision that lawmakers like Paul wish to see restored. He recognizes that the best people to deal with a problem are those in the community that are impacted by the problem, not a federal government which is so far removed from the scenario that they are incapable of understanding the needs to be met, or of meeting those needs.

It is for that reason that Paul contends FEMA should not respond to Hurricane Irene.



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