



TO: Members of the Florida House of Representatives

FROM: Richard Corcoran, Speaker

DATE: September 19, 2017

Hurricane Irma delivered a devastating blow to the people of Florida. The size and force of the storm was unprecedented, affecting all coasts and every community throughout the state. Thanks to Governor Scott's attention to detail and quick action, Floridians were able to prepare, endure, and begin the recovery process. We are grateful for his leadership.

With any event of this magnitude, lessons can be learned. We must move quickly to assess our recent experience and pinpoint tangible, meaningful ways to improve Florida's hurricane readiness and response capabilities. Our Governor has broad emergency powers that should allow him to address the immediate crisis, but the Legislature has a constitutional role to ensure that our state's laws, processes, and infrastructure are prepared for another storm with this potential for destruction.

I have created a Select Committee on Hurricane Response and Preparedness ("Select Committee"), which will be chaired by Speaker Pro Tempore Jeanette Nuñez. A complete list of the membership of the Select Committee is attached to this memo. The Select Committee will gather information, solicit ideas for improvement, and make recommendations to the Governor for actions within his emergency authority to address hurricane recovery. The Select Committee will also make recommendations for broader proposals to address hurricane preparedness that can be considered during the 2018 Legislative Session.

To assist the Select Committee in their work, we have prepared a list of issues and questions to serve as a starting point. This full list is attached for your convenience. The topics include:

Protection of Elderly, Disabled and Other Vulnerable Persons

1. Can the requirements for nursing homes, ALFs, and group homes be strengthened to improve the safety and comfort of the residents? Can the quality of facilities' emergency planning be improved? What are the barriers to facilities maintaining adequate staffing when evacuations occur or curfews are imposed?
2. Is there a need to expand the number of shelters or to improve their capacity to withstand wind damage, flooding, and prolonged power outages? Can schools and universities be more fully or effectively used as shelters?
3. Do the current arrangements for special needs shelters provide adequate resources for medically complex and technologically dependent patients? Are there regulatory, financial, or workforce barriers to meeting these patients' needs?

Efficient Evacuation and Reentry

1. Can fuel reserves be established or expanded in ways that would facilitate availability of fuel for evacuees?
2. Can availability of resources such as food, water, and other necessities be improved for evacuees?
3. What road improvements, such as improving shoulders on key roads, can be done to facilitate evacuation and reentry?
4. Are there strategies to assist homeowners and business owners in coping with prolonged limits on reentry?

Mitigation of Future Storm Damage

1. Are changes needed in the content or procedures of the current building code?
2. Can electric outages be limited by infrastructure hardening, solar lighting, or underground utilities?
3. Are there innovative ways to avoid or reduce flooding, including ways to expeditiously and safely remove excess water?

Many proposed solutions will require additional resources. Our financial position, as reported in the 3-year outlook and adopted by the Legislative Budget Commission last Friday, indicates modest revenue growth of approximately four percent during each of the next three years. Critical needs, maintenance of a minimum reserve, and normal legislative priorities are expected to significantly exceed the total available General Revenue funds in fiscal years 2019-20 and 2020-21. Mindful of these conditions, we should carefully evaluate each proposal for new spending. We should also re-evaluate our current expenditures and consider changing our priorities. For example, in FY 2017-18 the Legislature appropriated \$638.4 million in new funding on member projects. If we shift project funding in the next budget toward local hurricane recovery and mitigation efforts, we will provide a significant boost in resources for this purpose. I ask all of you, and our colleagues in the Senate, to join me in setting aside the business-as-usual of pork projects and instead invest all of those funds to either assist those in

need after Hurricane Irma or prepare Florida against the threat to life and property that will surely come with future storms.

Hurricane Irma has caused damage, but such difficulties are also opportunities. I look forward to working with all of you to identify, assess, and respond to the needs of our fellow Floridians. Our state has experienced disasters before and we surely will again, but if we work together we can ensure that our state remains on its path to a brighter future.