



THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

PETER D. LOPEZ
Assemblyman, 127th A.D.

Chenango, Columbia, Delaware,
Greene, Otsego, Schoharie and
Ulster Counties

Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of the State of New York
Executive Chamber, State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

First, let me again thank you for your compassion and support for our flood-ravaged communities. Your ongoing support continues to make a difference for all those who are suffering from the effects of Irene and Lee.

While the flood relief package advanced through the Legislature last December provided real support for rebuilding our communities, one measure in the package is compounding the fragile and nearly desperate financial situation of already weakened schools and local governments across the state. Among the benefits provided in the package, we collectively approved a measure (the Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee Assessment Relief Act) which would authorize schools and local governments, at local option, to immediately reassess and provide direct rebates to property owners who experienced more than 50 percent damage to their homes.

While supporting the measure as part of the total package, I have concerns regarding the ability of these institutions to cope with the loss of revenue and continue to provide services, even as they offer much-needed relief to individual disaster victims. A number of representatives have called me personally to advise they are in an untenable position and may refrain from exercising this option. Local discussions along these lines already have heightened tensions between our schools, local governments and the very people they serve – pitting them against each other, I believe, unnecessarily.

At a time where all of us in the impacted communities are at our lowest financial ebb, I respectfully submit that the state could help with this serious matter. In the December 2011 relief package, we appropriated \$20 million as a hedge against unmet local needs. In researching the bill language, I found it relatively broad, and believe these funds could be used to help reimburse those schools and local governments which opt into the rebate program. Additionally, I am preparing a chapter amendment, which would enable the state to supply additional funds as needed, for your review.

This issue is quickly coming to a head. Schools and local governments have been granted 45 days from the signing of the legislation (December 9, 2011), and must pass a resolution adopting the provisions of this Act on or before January 23, 2012. Your help in working with our legislative leaders to signal the availability of state assistance is critically needed. Absent state support, the goal of providing financial relief to our flood-ravaged homeowners will not be realized.

Respectfully,

Assemblyman Peter D. Lopez

RANKING MINORITY MEMBER
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