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AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT,
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AND RELATED AGENCIES

INTERIOR

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-3222

October 5, 2004

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Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20502

RE: FEMA-1564-DR
FEMA-1565-DR

Dear President Bush:

I am writing to urge you to expand and amend the New York Federal Disaster Declarations issued October 1, 2004, in order to provide critical assistance to the families and municipalities impacted by the recent series of severe storms and flooding in New York State. The storms and flooding that struck parts of New York State in August and September have wrought a tremendous amount of damage to both public and individual property, and the recent declarations do not provide the comprehensive assistance that is vitally needed in order to allow families and local municipalities to deal with the staggering damage and financial losses they have incurred.

The Disaster Declaration for the storms and flooding during the period from August 29 through September 16, 2004 includes only Public Assistance for the designated counties and excluded Individual Assistance that was requested and recommended by the New York State Emergency Management Office. Having personally toured many of the homes and businesses impacted by the violent thunderstorms and heavy flooding that occurred in late August, I can attest to the extensive damage impacting the homes in the flooded areas and the serious personal losses experienced by local residents.

Many families have waited patiently for federal assistance for more than one month. The recent Declaration, however, does not provide these residents with any federal Individual Assistance through FEMA and other agencies and has left them rightly questioning how the federal government could have failed them so in their time of greatest need. The Declaration for Public Assistance also did not include the impacted municipalities in the County of Orange, New York, which experienced substantial damage from the same storms and flooding.

The Disaster Declaration for the remnants of Hurricane Ivan, which hit New York State on September 18, 2004, also should be expanded to include Public Assistance. In many of the counties in this region, public infrastructure has been severely impacted. Many local governments are struggling to find funding to rebuild their roads, culverts,

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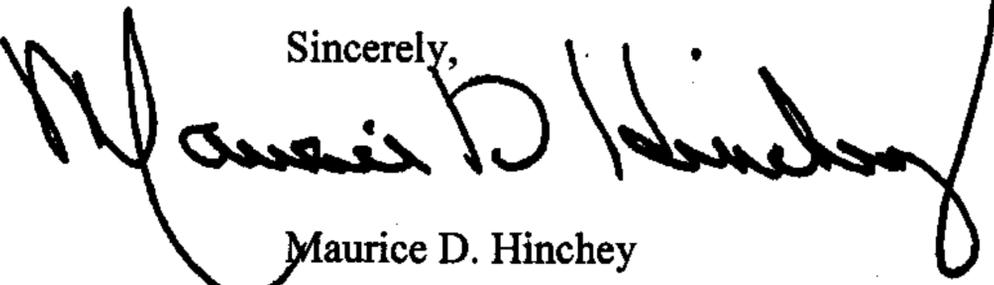
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bridges and even water and sewer infrastructure damaged or destroyed in the recent floods. These largely rural communities have limited local tax bases and financial resources. Without assistance from the federal government, many local leaders question how they will be able to make necessary repairs, the cost of which far exceeds local resources. Additionally, the Declarations for Individual Assistance omitted Tioga County, whose residents also experienced substantial personal property losses.

I understand that the New York State Emergency Management Office is formally appealing the recent declarations, and I hope that you will strongly consider this request and expand your recent Disaster Declarations to include the previously omitted forms of assistance and the counties omitted in the October 1 Declaration. To the residents and communities of New York State, this Declaration and resultant federal assistance is vital to enabling them to rebuild from the storms.

Please let me know if I may provide any additional information or I can be of any assistance. Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter.

Best regards.

Sincerely,

Maurice D. Hinchey