

FRANCIS ROONEY

19TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

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COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

**Congress of the United States**  
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August 6, 2018

President Donald J. Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write today urgently requesting that you issue a major disaster declaration for Lee and Collier Counties due to the current environmental crisis and invite you to see firsthand the devastation impacting Southwest Florida. Your approval of this request is an imperative pre-condition to making relief available to our community. Southwest Florida is facing a difficult and prolonged challenge which will take time and significant resources to overcome.

Less than one year ago, Hurricane Irma made landfall in Southwest Florida causing major damage and leaving our citizens hopeless going into the vital winter economic season. Because of their resilience, our citizens overcame Hurricane Irma and had a successful year.

Now they face another overwhelming crisis. Unusually large spring and summer rainfall, and one tropical depression, have generated massive discharges from Lake Okeechobee which have brought toxic algal blooms to our community, crippling our local economy and inflicting serious environmental destruction. The numerous, continuing fish kills which are washing dead grouper, dolphins and sea turtles onto our beaches have caused, and continue to cause, massive loss of income to our real estate and tourism industries. To make matters even worse, we have been plagued by a lingering red tide just off of our beaches which has been exacerbated by the algal blooms.

Emergency funding would provide the resources needed by local governments to remove the toxic algae from the water and lower the risk of impact from red tide. Adding emergency funding to the existing plans for funding the projects of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan and the Herbert Hoover Dike will ensure that these events will not hinder Southwest Florida in the future. This will also provide local businesses who are suffering with a safety net and continue to provide vital services to the community.

We have discussed the environmental concerns facing Southwest Florida many times, and your administration has helped more than any previous one. We are deeply grateful for your support.

However, we desperately need emergency disaster resources now. I look forward to assisting your administration in any way possible to help our community recover. Your declaration will help us overcome the economic damage which a combination of harmful discharges from the lake and an incursion of red tide have wrought.

I urge you to join me in viewing the damage firsthand. The environment is devastated, and the people of Southwest Florida are overwhelmed, frustrated and in need of relief. A major disaster declaration is imperative to save our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Francis Rooney". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font. The first name "Francis" is written with a large, looping 'F', and the last name "Rooney" is written with a large, looping 'R'. The signature is positioned above a horizontal line.

Francis Rooney  
Member of Congress