

ONG to be reimbursed \$2.7 million for Hurricane Katrina aid

by Bend Weekly News Sources

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) yesterday announced a grant to the state of Louisiana for approximately \$2.7 million to cover the costs of reimbursing the Oregon National Guard (ONG) for services provided in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. The state of Louisiana must now reimburse the ONG for this amount. The funds are expected to be transferred to the ONG this week.

Oregon's entire congressional delegation sent a letter to FEMA Acting Director R. David Paulison in early December informing him of the shortfall the Oregon Military Department faced without FEMA's reimbursement, and urged him to remedy this oversight as soon as possible. Thanks to the delegation's efforts, the ONG will be reimbursed in full.

Because of the federal government's belated response to Hurricane Katrina, Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco requested the ONG to assist in the relief effort. The ONG exceeded expectations by deploying over 2,100 soldiers and their equipment to New Orleans in less than three days.

"Our soldiers volunteered to provide a vital service during a time of emergency, and the Oregon Military Department should be fully reimbursed for that valuable work," DeFazio said. "It's past time the federal government fulfilled its obligation to these soldiers."

"We could not allow our brave soldiers to get stuck with the bill when they've already risked so much," Wyden said. "I'm glad that FEMA has finally seen the wisdom of fully reimbursing our citizen soldiers for their sacrifice."

"The federal government had a responsibility to meet for the tremendous work done by the Oregon National Guard in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and I'm glad they met it," Walden said. "I will always be extremely proud of what the Oregon National Guard did for their fellow citizens in Louisiana and Mississippi under the most difficult of circumstances, and for the services they provide our communities every day."

"When the city of New Orleans was in crisis in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the Oregon National Guard was there to help," Blumenauer said. "I am pleased the federal government is keeping its end of the bargain and reimbursing the Oregon National Guard for its service to our country."

"In less than three days, Oregon's National Guard stepped up to the plate and provided the assistance New Orleans needed to begin to heal. But for over a year, the state of Oregon carried the financial cost," Wu said. "It was good to hear finally that FEMA did the right thing."

"Oregon's citizen soldiers answered the call swiftly and should be fully reimbursed for their outstanding service," Hooley said. "I am pleased to see FEMA finally take concrete action to ensure that finally happens."

"Oregon's National Guard does a tremendous job, often in dire circumstances," Smith said. "This funding is essential in supporting their efforts during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina."

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