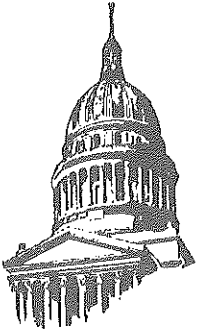


# The Senate of West Virginia



March 27, 2019

Co-Chair Swope:

Thank you for serving as the Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on Flooding. We appreciate your request to provide information on major, ongoing issues in flood recovery in the communities we represent. Our committee can be enormously helpful to the recovery process by serving as a communication hub as well as a point of accountability for the various entities involved in what is a complicated process. Here are the major issues along with recommendations:

## 1. *COMMUNICATIONS*

- a. **ISSUE:** No single entity serves as the central hub for recovery communications. Our lack of meetings has allowed recovery to languish. We need to keep our finger on the pulse and hood folks accountable.
- b. **RECOMMENDATION:** Meet at least once a month this entire year. Set a schedule now. For two years, local communities have been waiting on us to have meetings there to see what needs exist, and for two years they have waited. We recommend rotating meetings between Charleston and affected communities such as Clendenin, Rainelle, White Sulphur Springs, & McMechen.

## 2. *RISE* (Major McIntire, WVNG)

- a. **ISSUE:** Nearly a year after the WVNG took over RISE from Commerce, the number of active cases has gone from 435 to 421, a minimal change in such a long period of time. A few homes have been constructed, but even they have not been fully funded. The numbers are hard to come by depending on what counts (mobiles, rehabs, new construction). Major strife with the contractors continues to exist. A spending report for 2019 shows a mere \$72,000 spent on construction so far this year...with 421 outstanding cases.
- b. **RECOMMENDATION:** Invite Maj. McIntire and Gen. Hoyer to our meeting for an in-depth examination of what has been accomplished, what remains, and how we can speed up recovery.

## 3. *SCHOOLS* (FEMA, DHSEM, WVNG)

- a. **ISSUE:** Two Kanawha County schools remain closed after the 2016 flood-- Herbert Hoover High & Clendenin Elementary. Students attend portable classrooms (and have for two years). Construction hasn't even begun yet. Squabbles between FEMA and state government are ongoing.
- b. **RECOMMENDATION:** Hold a committee meeting in Clendenin and invite FEMA as well as Kanawha County Schools, Brian Abraham from Gov. Justice's office, and Gen. Hoyer. Make it a hearing regarding the plan for the schools and what we can do to help.

## 4. *WVDHSEM GRANT PROGRAMS* (Col. Todorovich, DHSEM)

- a. **ISSUE:** At our last meeting in December, we received an update from DHSEM after a major leadership shakeup. Many of our communities continue to languish

with grant programs that aren't showing any results. Col. Todorovich provided financial statements showing how much money they had for each program and promised to begin pushing it out quickly as soon as his new financial staff got to work. (Results we have yet to see on the ground.)


- b. RECOMMENDATION: Invite Col. Todorovich and his financial staff back for Q&A. Send grant statements showing how much has been received and how much has been spent to committee members before the meeting.
5. *STATE RESILIENCY OFFICE REORGANIZATION* (Gen. Hoyer, WVNG & Sec. Gaunch, Commerce)
    - a. ISSUE: In 2017, the SRO was created by statute to provide mitigation. They only recently hired their first employee and have yet to hold a public meeting.
    - b. RECOMMENDATION: Request an update on the SRO from Gen. Hoyer and Sec. Gaunch so we know where it stands, how it functions, and how we relate to it. Legislation will likely be required to clarify roles/duties/members.
  6. *FLOOD CONTROL DAMS* (Brian Farkas, WVCA)
    - a. ISSUE: Our flood control dams, most of which are earthen dams, badly need repairs. The Conservation Agency did receive an additional \$2 million towards those needs this year.
    - b. RECOMMENDATION: Schedule a summer meeting at Tuckahoe Dam in White Sulphur Springs and invite Brian Farkas to discuss their plans for improvements across the state.
  7. *STREAM GAUGE EXPANSION* (Jeremy White, USGS)
    - a. ISSUE: Experts told us to expand our gauge network to include streams and creeks that flood. We worked with Sen. Blair to secure surplus funds in 2018 to purchase new gauges. In 2019, we amended the budget to include funds to maintain those new gauges, but it was removed in the final budget. We are meeting with all involved parties next week to see how we can make it work. (You are welcome to join this meeting on April 4 at 2pm at Coonskin. We would love to have you.)
    - b. RECOMMENDATION: Invite Jeremy White of the USGS, current chair of the council, to provide an update on new gauge installation and how that was affected by this year's budget.

We hope this brief overview of several major issues is helpful. Please feel free to be in touch with questions or for conversation. We are always available to assist in this important work. We all want to help flood survivors recover as quickly as possible and prepare for the next time it happens.

Sincerely,



Senator Stephen Baldwin



Senator Glenn Jeffries