

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 5, 2007

The Honorable George W. Bush  
President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to ask for your expedited approval of Governor Mitch Daniels' request for a Major Disaster Area Declaration for the State of Indiana as a result of severe storms, damaging winds, and a tornado one-half mile wide that created a path of destruction over 20 miles long on October 18, 2007, affecting Elkhart, Kosciusko and Marshall Counties. The communities affected by the storms are in serious need of federal assistance, and we fully support the Governor's request.

The tornado destroyed 51 homes and caused major damage to another 137. An additional 201 residences were determined to have sustained minor damage or were affected. Also, the City of Nappanee lost several buildings that housed its Street Department facilities. Water treatment and distribution as well as wastewater systems were also harmed.

A total of 107 businesses have sustained physical damages, and many more have been impacted indirectly as a result of this disaster. Even minor damages can have a major impact on business and employment.

Unemployment has become a critical issue in this disaster. Two of Nappanee's (population 6,710) major employers, Fairmount Homes, a manufacturer of modular homes (and major supplier of travel trailers during the Hurricane Katrina/Rita housing emergency) and Gulfstream, a travel trailer manufacturer, both had production facilities seriously damaged. Several of its operating units were destroyed. Collectively, these companies employ over 3,000 local residents. Franklin Coach, a company with a workforce of 65, is unable to operate. Its manufacturing facilities suffered a direct hit by the tornado. At this time, it is doubtful that the company will be able to reopen. Employees are presently laid off with no anticipated return date. Currently, voluntary agencies are providing minimum financial assistance to these employees to meet their immediate living expenses.

While the total number of affected people may seem small, to the small rural Elkhart County community of Nappanee, where the preponderance of the damage occurred, the effect is devastating. Although wildfires in California have reportedly affected thousands of people, the number represents a relatively-small percentage of the millions of people who live in the San Diego and Los Angeles area—compared to potentially 50 percent of people in Nappanee who are facing employment problems. We point this out not to take away from the devastation caused by the fires in California, but

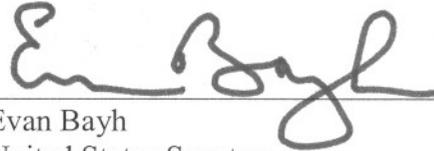
to demonstrate the tornado's proportionally-greater impact on Nappanee. Smaller communities are entitled to receive the exact same treatment and attention as larger cities. Based on the extent of the damage, timely federal assistance is essential to ensure that local government agencies, businesses and families impacted by these events are able to recover in a suitable manner.

We respectfully urge you to approve Governor Daniels' full request as quickly as possible. We appreciate your serious consideration of this matter and look forward to working with you in any way to ensure that those affected by this disaster receive the appropriate assistance.

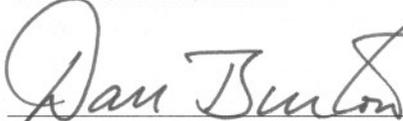
Sincerely,



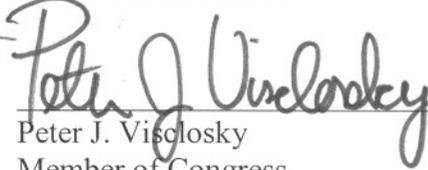
Richard G. Lugar  
United States Senator



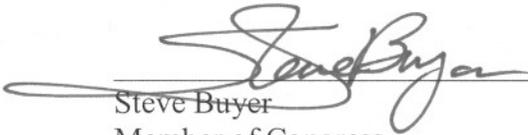
Evan Bayh  
United States Senator



Dan Burton  
Member of Congress



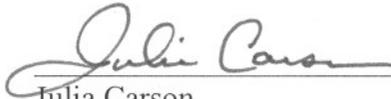
Peter J. Visclosky  
Member of Congress



Steve Buyer  
Member of Congress



Mark Souder  
Member of Congress



Julia Carson  
Member of Congress



Baron Hill  
Member of Congress



Mike Pence  
Member of Congress



Joe Donnelly  
Member of Congress



Brad Ellsworth  
Member of Congress