

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

April 18, 2018

The Honorable William B. "Brock" Long  
Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C St SW  
Washington, DC 20024-2523

Dear Administrator Long:

We write today to request that you extend the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Mission Assignment to restore power in Puerto Rico beyond the current termination date of May 18, 2018. We believe that USACE must continue its vital work to restore electrical service on the island until power is fully restored and the plan for transition to full control and operation of the grid by the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA) is completed and implemented.

More than six months after Hurricanes Irma and Maria made landfall, approximately 49,000 people on Puerto Rico remain without power.<sup>1</sup> Although the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recently extended the USACE Mission Assignment until May 18,<sup>2</sup> we have received no assurance that power will be fully restored by this date. We therefore request FEMA further extend the Mission Assignment so that USACE's power restoration efforts can continue until power is fully restored to all communities in Puerto Rico.

Additionally, ongoing blackouts have underscored the fragility of the grid, including a blackout this morning which has reportedly affected the entire island and is expected to last an estimated 24 to 36 hours. Today's blackout follows an incident last week when nearly 900,000 people – more than half of all power customers in Puerto Rico – lost power when a tree fell onto a primary power line, forcing the main hospital and international airport to switch to generator power.<sup>3</sup> Given these ongoing challenges, transition to full control of future work and grid operation by PREPA requires a clear strategy developed in conjunction with the territory. An extension of the Mission Assignment is necessary to allow additional time for capacity-building to ensure that a transition strategy can be effectively developed and implemented prior to the departure of federal contractors.

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<sup>1</sup> House Committee on Energy and Commerce, *Hearing on 'Update on the Restoration of Puerto Rico's Electric Infrastructure*, 115<sup>th</sup> Cong. (Apr. 11, 2018).

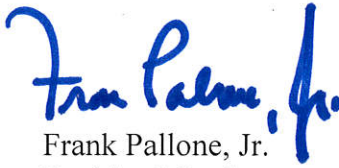
<sup>2</sup> U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, *USACE Awards Additional \$140.5 Million for Power Grid Restoration Efforts in Puerto Rico* (Apr. 7, 2018) (press release).

<sup>3</sup> *Another Power Outage Hits Puerto Rico, Leaving About 840,000 in the Dark, Officials Say*, Washington Post (Apr. 12, 2018).

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Thank you for your prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Energy  
and Commerce



Peter A. DeFazio  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Transportation  
and Infrastructure



Bennie G. Thompson  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Homeland Security



Raúl M. Grijalva  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Natural Resources

Cc: Lieutenant General Todd T. Semonite, Commanding General and Chief of Engineers,  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers