



## MISSOURI SENATE

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**A Column for the Week  
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# Governor Appealing FEMA Decision

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JEFFERSON CITY — In spite of efforts by Gov. Blunt, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has denied a request for federal assistance for residents of 12 counties affected by the heavy storms of late September. This decision by FEMA to ignore damage to the homes, businesses and agriculture of Southeast Missouri is unwise, and I fully support Gov. Blunt's vow to appeal the decision in an effort to obtain federal assistance.

The storms of Sept. 22-23 ravaged vast expanses of Missouri, from Phelps and Howell counties all the way to Ripley, Dunklin and Perry counties. The severe weather produced high winds, hail, tornadoes and flooding. To help with recovery efforts, Gov. Blunt requested disaster assistance for 12 Missouri counties, including the counties of Butler, Dunklin, New Madrid and Ripley.

The governor made the right decision. More than 600 homes and 75 businesses sustained damage from the September storms. Further, the Missouri Farm Service Agency has reported that Southeast Missouri farmers saw at least 30 percent agricultural loss, which would qualify them for disaster assistance. I hope that FEMA pays closer attention to these figures when reconsidering the request for assistance. Meanwhile, the governor is working to collect additional information for the assistance appeal.

Affordable housing and long-term recovery are the major concerns when it comes to getting Southeast Missourians back on their feet, and Missouri understands that assistance has to start at home. The Governor's Disaster Recovery Partnership, comprised of volunteer and faith-based disaster-response organizations, is working on affordable housing options for displaced citizens and long-term recovery issues in several of the communities that have been hit the hardest.

At the same time, Missouri will continue efforts to obtain federal assistance. Federal Disaster declarations were approved for Missouri storms in March and April, and for the destructive July storms in the St. Louis area that caused widespread power outages. Missouri has until Nov. 18 to appeal FEMA's decision, and officials are doing everything they can to correct the denial for federal assistance.

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*Senator Robert Mayer represents the people of Wayne, Ripley, Butler, Stoddard, New Madrid, Pemiscot and Dunklin counties in the Missouri Senate.*