



Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Sam Graves  
Chairman

Rick Larsen  
Ranking Member

Jack Ruddy, Staff Director

Katherine W. Dedrick, Democratic Staff Director

December 3, 2024

Honorable Joseph V. Cuffari  
Inspector General  
Office of Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
245 Murray Lane SW  
Washington, DC 20528-0305

Dear Inspector General Cuffari:

The Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure (Committee) is investigating incidences of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) employees passing over homes impacted by Hurricanes Helene and Milton that displayed Trump campaign signs.<sup>1</sup> On November 19, 2024, Administrator Deanne Criswell appeared on Capitol Hill and provided conflicting testimony regarding whether your office has initiated an investigation into instances of political targeting by FEMA during its disaster recovery efforts.<sup>2</sup> The Committee is requesting that you immediately open an investigation into the multiple allegations of the deliberate avoidance of homes with Trump campaign or political signs during the agency's response to Hurricanes Helene and Milton.

On November 8, 2024, the *Daily Wire* first reported that a FEMA employee deployed to Lake Placid, Florida, to respond to the devastation caused by Hurricane Milton instructed employees to "avoid homes advertising Trump."<sup>3</sup> The next day, Administrator Criswell issued an

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Scott Perry, Chairman, Subcomm. on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management, & Sam Graves, Chairman, H. Comm. on Transp. and Infrastructure, to Administrator Deanne Criswell, FEMA, U.S. Dep't of Homeland Sec. (Nov. 14, 2024), available at [https://transportation.house.gov/uploadedfiles/2024-11-14\\_-\\_ti\\_florida\\_fema\\_letter.pdf](https://transportation.house.gov/uploadedfiles/2024-11-14_-_ti_florida_fema_letter.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> *In the Eye of the Storm: Oversight of FEMA's Disaster Readiness and Response Before the Subcomm. on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management of the H. Comm. on Transp. and Infrastructure*, 118th Cong. (Nov. 19, 2024) (Statement of Administrator Criswell: "I would welcome an investigation by the IG...I will request one."); *Oversight of the Federal Emergency Management Agency: Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Oversight and Accountability*, 118th Cong. (Nov. 19, 2024) (Statement of Administrator Criswell: "And I have asked the Inspector General to take a look at this.").

<sup>3</sup> Leif Le Mahieu, *EXCLUSIVE: FEMA Official Ordered Relief Workers To Skip Houses With Trump Signs*, THE DAILY WIRE (Nov. 8, 2024), available at <https://www.dailywire.com/news/exclusive-fema-official-ordered-reliefworkers-to-skip-houses-with-trump-signs> [hereinafter Daily Wire Article].

official statement which asserted that the actions of the FEMA employee were a “clear violation of FEMA’s core values and principles” and that the employee had been terminated and the matter referred to the Office of Special Counsel.<sup>4</sup> The FEMA employee later appeared for multiple interviews and has argued that she was simply following orders from her superior.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the former FEMA employee reported that FEMA employees avoided homes with Trump campaign signs in multiple states that were impacted by Hurricanes Helene and Milton.<sup>6</sup> In North Carolina, the Committee is aware of reports of FEMA employees skipping any home that displayed a “Make America Great Again,” “Drain the Swamp,” “Don’t Tread on Me,” or Trump campaign sign. If the FEMA field team encountered three or more of these signs, the field team could abandon the entire neighborhood without notifying hurricane victims of assistance available to them. FEMA leadership has given no indication of whether it will perform additional outreach to homes in North Carolina that were not canvassed as a result of this policy.

The Committee also has serious concerns regarding the alleged disclosure of the terminated FEMA employee’s personal information and home address as well as her allegations that FEMA records may have been deleted. During her testimony before the Committee, Administrator Criswell asserted that all agency records are preserved and that she would send any requested records to the Committee to assist its investigation.<sup>7</sup> The Committee requests that you notify staff if your office should uncover any deleted records relevant to this investigation.

The actions taken by FEMA supervisors in directing employees to avoid homes that displayed Trump campaign signs or flags are disturbing and raise serious questions about the culture and political bias that permeates FEMA leadership. The Committee is increasingly concerned that this discriminatory practice of avoidance was more widespread than reported, and could have harmed victims who may still be unaware of the Federal relief benefits available to them. The Office of Inspector General is charged with providing independent oversight of the Department of Homeland Security (Department) and ensuring that the Department operates with “excellence, integrity, and accountability.”<sup>8</sup> It is imperative that you work to investigate these allegations and uncover how FEMA employees were permitted to implement such a discriminatory policy.

The Committee is requesting that your office open an immediate investigation into the allegations discussed in this letter and provide the Committee with regular briefings on the

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<sup>4</sup> Press Release, U.S. Dep’t of Homeland Security, FEMA, *Statement from FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell on Employee Misconduct*, (Nov. 9, 2024), available at <https://www.fema.gov/press-release/20241109/statement-fema-administrator-deanne-criswell-employee-misconduct>.

<sup>5</sup> Anna Kutz, *‘I’m being framed’: Fired FEMA worker Marn’I Washington speaks out*, NEWSNATION (Nov. 19, 2024), available at <https://www.newsnationnow.com/danabramslive/fired-fema-supervisor-marni-washington/>.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Pinedo, *Fired FEMA employee says instructions to skip Trump homes were part of ‘colossal avoidance’ policy*, FOX NEWS (Nov. 12, 2024), available at <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/fired-fema-employee-says-instructions-skip-trump-homes-were-part-colossal-avoidance-policy>.

<sup>7</sup> *In the Eye of the Storm: Oversight of FEMA’s Disaster Readiness and Response Before the Subcomm. on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management of the H. Comm. on Transp. and Infrastructure*, 118th Cong. (Nov. 19, 2024) (Statement of Administrator Criswell: “Congressman, all of our records are preserved, and I can commit to you that any request that you make we will make sure to send them to you.”).

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Dep’t of Homeland Sec., *About Us*, available at <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/about>.

Inspector General Cuffari

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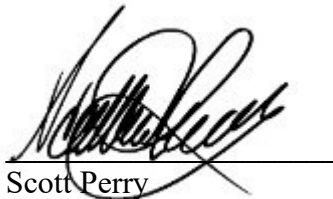
preliminary findings of its investigation. FEMA must work to restore the trust of the American people, and your office plays a crucial role in bringing transparency and accountability to the agency.

Pursuant to House Rule X, clause 1(r), the Committee has jurisdiction over these issues and shall conduct appropriate oversight of these actions. If you have any questions about this request, please contact Johanna Hardy, with the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management [REDACTED]. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Sam Graves  
Chairman  
Committee on Transportation and  
Infrastructure



Scott Perry  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Economic  
Development, Public Buildings and  
Emergency Management

cc: The Honorable Rick Larsen, Ranking Member  
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

The Honorable Dina Titus, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency  
Management