



Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty

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Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore
Chairman

July 29, 2013

The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senate
478 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
United States Senate
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Gillibrand and Senator Blunt:

We write in support of your legislation, the Federal Disaster Assistance Nonprofit Fairness Act of 2013, S. 1274, which would ensure the fair and equal treatment for houses of worship damaged in natural disasters.

Your legislation is consistent with Supreme Court jurisprudence, which recognizes the right of religious institutions to receive public financial aid in the context of a broad program administered on the basis of religion-neutral criteria. The bill is not asking for special treatment, just equal treatment that conforms to constitutional protections.

It should be noted that in the aftermath of a natural disaster houses of worship often play an irreplaceable role in the recovery of a community. Discrimination that treats houses of worship as ineligible for federal assistance in the wake of a natural disaster, beyond being a legal violation, hurts the very communities most affected by the indiscriminate force of nature.

The best approach to address questions of eligibility for houses of worship is a permanent clarification of federal law. For this reason we support your bill and ask that it be adopted by Congress.

Sincerely,

Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore
Chairman, USCCB Ad Hoc Committee for
Religious Liberty

Most Reverend Denis J. Madden
Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore
Chairman, USCCB Committee for
Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs