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House of Representatives  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
HARRISBURG

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**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Members of the House of Representatives

**FROM:** Representative Eddie Day Pashinski  
Representative Phyllis Mundy  
Representative Michael Carroll  
Representative Gerald Mullery

**DATE:** October 14, 2011

**SUBJECT:** Natural Disaster Assistance Legislative Package

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In the near future, we plan to introduce a four-bill legislative package that will ensure assistance is provided to natural disaster victims in the Commonwealth. This package will provide the essential disaster assistance programs for individuals, businesses, non-profit organizations, and local governments.

The first piece of legislation authorizes the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, PEMA, to distribute low-interest rate loans to businesses for disaster assistance and to individuals who were not eligible for disaster assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, or other PEMA programs. The goal of this legislation is twofold. First, it will provide businesses with the opportunity to receive a low interest rate loan from the state for disaster relief, as compared to what is offered by other governmental agencies. In addition, it will provide loans to individuals and families when additional assistance is not available.

The second bill authorizes PEMA to distribute loans to communities and individuals who were approved, but awaiting, federal assistance from FEMA. This loan would be interest free for the 60 days and would increase to an interest rate of 1% thereafter. The goal of this legislation is to distribute needed financial assistance to individuals and communities in a timely manner.

The third piece of legislation provides additional funding to the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program from the Budget Surplus Revenue of the General Fund. The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program provides state agencies, local governments, Indian tribal governments, and non-profit

organizations the opportunity to take mitigation measures to reduce the impact of future natural disasters. The HMGP funds activities such as property acquisition, structure demolition, structure relocation, structure elevation, mitigation reconstruction, dry flood proofing of historic structures, minor localized flood reduction projects, structural or non-structure retrofitting of existing buildings, safe room construction, infrastructure retrofit, soil stabilization, wildfire mitigation, post-disaster code enforcement, initiative projects, hazard mitigation planning, and management costs. The goal of this legislation is to provide additional funding to an established program in order to increase the amount received by grantees.

The final bill included in this package provides for an amendment to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to include provisions relating to special emergency legislation. This legislation would provide the General Assembly with the necessary authority to enact laws that would provide special provisions for any individual, corporation, association, or non-profit organization that are impacted by a natural disaster. The provisions would alleviate the danger, damage, suffering, or hardship from the natural disaster, such as the programs proposed in the aforementioned bills.

As members of the General Assembly, it is our duty to continue to provide protection to our citizens of this great Commonwealth, especially in the event of a natural disaster. If you would like to join me in cosponsoring any of these vital pieces of legislation, please contact Lauren Bordner at [lbordner@pahouse.net](mailto:lbordner@pahouse.net).