

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

October 14, 2011

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

This year's natural disasters have posed significant problems for many communities throughout Missouri but none more challenging than the ones facing the people of Joplin. Joplin suffered unprecedented devastation and destruction from the historic tornado of May 22. It was the deadliest tornado since 1947 and some 8,000 homes and apartments were destroyed.

It is critical that all the tools available be utilized to respond to the extraordinary needs of the victims. One critical tool is access to housing. The Department has housing programs that could be very helpful to a great many tornado victims. Joplin is, in most every way, a rural town, but its population exceeds the limits for the Rural Housing Programs without a waiver.

We understand that under the Housing Act of 1949, the Secretary has the authority to waive rural area limitations in the RHS housing programs in the case of a disaster and that this authority was recently used after Hurricane Katrina.

We request that you exercise this waiver so that eligible tornado victims may have access to much needed housing programs. Please do not hesitate to contact us should additional information be necessary.

Sincerely,



Senator Roy Blunt



Senator Claire McCaskill



Representative Billy Long