

## LETTER FROM REBUILD 850 CO-CHAIRS TO MEMBERS OF THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE

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Rebuild850.org

January 22, 2019

Dear Members of the Florida Legislature:

Thank you for your leadership and your service to Florida. For your important work in the upcoming 2019 legislative session, we are reaching out to you as the Co-Chairs of REBUILD 850 — the dynamic initiative created in the wake of Hurricane Michael’s devastation to a broad swath of Northwest Florida. The initiative’s four values are to encourage others to Donate, Volunteer, Visit and Invest to help the region and its residents. Our sole purpose is to make sure our fellow citizens — in Florida and across the nation — keep the needs of the thousands of our affected neighbors as a priority focus. We know that you will do that, too, in vital decisions that you make about helping the region to recover and rebuild.

This letter seeks your support for a meaningful opportunity to help millions of Floridians prepare for the dangerous “new normal” of intensified hurricane seasons. With 1,000 new residents moving to Florida daily, a growing segment has little or no experience in weathering a major storm. And, even among long-term residents, hurricane preparation is often a last-minute priority that increases the risks of being unprepared for a major storm — leaving many very vulnerable to preventable property loss, injuries and even death.

Emergency management experts strongly advocate that consistent statewide public education is essential to prepare Florida residents and visitors with life-saving information about home hardening, hurricane planning, evacuation and other topics that can change behavior and enhance safety. A comprehensive public education campaign could reduce injuries, loss of life and expensive property damage.

The non-profit FAIR Foundation is a respected founding partner in REBUILD 850. For the past several years, the FAIR Foundation has secured private funding from corporate sponsors to produce “Get Ready, Florida!” — a highly regarded statewide initiative that includes intensive public education for hurricane preparation and response. Elements include statewide polls/surveys, an up-to-date website, ongoing public education via news media and forums, a comprehensive season-long blanketing social/digital media campaign, and a high-quality 30-minute television special, broadcast in each of Florida’s 10 media markets.

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A few years ago, the “Get Ready, Florida!” television special was honored with a coveted Emmy Award for program excellence — but its real value is the deep reach and positive impact it has on educating millions of Floridians about what to do before, during and after these deadly storms brush by or make landfall in Florida.

The statewide reach and positive impact of this proven initiative could be substantially expanded through a public-private partnership that leverages limited state dollars as a complement to targeted private funding and deeper, valuable media exposure. The return on investment for such a model would be enormous. Existing reach could be more than tripled with a limited state expenditure, and the potential to reduce future losses through better education is significant. Ultimately, the reasonable public cost is more than justified by what it likely saves: lives and property.

A “Get Ready, Florida!” public-private statewide educational initiative will keep hurricane preparedness messages in front of Floridians for the duration of hurricane season, bringing together government partners, nonprofit and commercial experts for a life- and property-saving goal.

Organizations cooperating and collaborating under the “Get Ready, Florida!” umbrella created by the FAIR Foundation include The Salvation Army, the International Hurricane Research Center at Florida International University and NEMA — the National Emergency Management Association, among others. Substantive input is also sought by experts at the National Hurricane Center and Florida’s Division of Emergency Management. The project’s credibility is further boosted by the expertise of our own Craig Fugate, former longtime State of Florida emergency management chief who also served with distinction nationally as the administrator of FEMA. Craig is the credible expert and on-camera anchoring host of “Get Ready, Florida!” His participation significantly advances the project in its credibility, substance, and appeal.

We ask your earnest commitment and support for embracing a public-private partnership with the FAIR Foundation to ensure that millions of Floridians are better educated and prepared for the “mean season” of hurricanes in 2019 and beyond.

Again, many thanks for your active consideration of this opportunity and request — and for your dedicated service to Florida.

Very Truly Yours,



Allan Bense



Will Weatherford



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Co-Chairs of REBUILD 850