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SENATE BIPARTISAN TASK FORCE ON HURRICANE SANDY RECOVERY RELEASES PRELIMINARY REPORT OUTLINING RECOMMENDATIONS ON STORM RELIEF, CONTINGENCY PLANNING, AND DISASTER MITIGATION

After touring New York's hardest hit areas and hosting stakeholder roundtables across the NYC metro area, the Bipartisan Task Force issued its first report with 10 preliminary recommendations to aid recovery efforts and assist in future disaster planning

Less than three months after Senate Co-Leaders Jeffrey D. Klein and Dean G. Skelos launched the New York State Senate Bipartisan Task Force on Hurricane Sandy recovery, the Task Force has released its preliminary report and recommendations on Sandy relief and storm planning. The preliminary report and recommendations come after Task Force members toured storm damaged communities across the New York City Metro Area, including Freeport, Island Park, Oceanside, The Rockaways, Staten Island, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and the Hudson Valley.

Following each tour, the Task Force held roundtable discussions with over one hundred community, private sector, and government stakeholders, including major insurance carriers and senior members of the Cuomo administration. Today's preliminary report outlines the Task Force's key findings from these roundtables and sets forth 10 preliminary recommendations. The Task Force will release a final report in the coming weeks.

The Task Force's key findings and preliminary recommendations include:

- Developing certification and licensing procedures for mold remediation contractors.
- Supplementing existing business loan programs with direct grants to businesses severely impacted by Sandy.
- Working with the Department of Financial Services to expedite insurance claim check processing to ensure that homeowners get the resources they need to rebuild their homes as soon as possible.
- Developing better statewide protocols for gasoline distributions so that the energy needs of first responders and other critical service providers are properly prioritized.
- Exploring the use of soft barriers as a means of mitigating future storm damage.

Senate Majority Coalition Co-Leader and Independent Democratic Conference Leader Jeffrey D. Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester) said, "The Task Force's work is emblematic of the meaningful, bipartisan results we want to deliver for all New Yorkers. I want to thank the Task Force's members and their staff for the hard work and the long-hours they've continually dedicated to this critically important effort. I look forward to implementing the Task Force's final recommendations in the weeks ahead."

Task Force Co-Chair Senator Andrew Lanza (R,I,C-Staten Island) said, “Now that the state budget process has begun and we’ve seen first-hand the devastation and obstacles our neighbors are having to endure, it is critically important that we ensure federal, state and local resources are maximized and targeted to bring swift relief for short-term and long-term recovery.”

Task Force Co-Chair Senator Malcolm Smith (D-Queens) said, “This has been one of most important legislative collaborations that I have ever been a part of. Task Force members and staff have been hard at work identifying the most pressing needs of Sandy’s victims and developing innovative ways to solve the most complex problems. As I’ve seen each and every day in my district, Sandy victims need help, plain and simple. I am pleased that today can take a big step forward towards delivering the type of help these folks need.”

Senator Phil Boyle said, “As members of the Hurricane Sandy Task Force toured the most hard hit areas of our State, we were stunned at the devastation wrought by the storm, but touched by the generosity and resiliency of New Yorkers. This preliminary report will assist our colleagues in the Senate with a roadmap to assist thousands of our neighbors who are still suffering while helping all of us prepare for future storms.”

Senator Diane Savino (D-Staten Island/Brooklyn) said, “Thousands of families in Staten Island and Brooklyn are still picking up the pieces from Sandy’s devastation. Over the next weeks and months, nothing can be more important to us as legislators than rebuilding the homes, communities, and businesses that are still reeling. My Task Force colleagues and I are committed to getting effected New Yorkers the resources they need to not only rebuild, but to rebuild in a stronger, safer, and better prepared state.”

Senator Jack M. Martins said, “We have had the opportunity to visit the areas most affected by Superstorm Sandy and to listen firsthand to the concerns of our communities. We are now moving forward on legislation that will meet the needs of our communities and better prepare us for future storms.”

Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland) said, “This taskforce report offers real policy proposals that will help New Yorkers rebuild from the most devastating storm to ever hit our shores. We have listened to the concerns from local officials, businesses, and homeowners all throughout our state. With so much at stake, many are relying on sound guidance and action from Albany to address these challenges. These preliminary recommendations are a critical first step to ensuring that our response and coordination during and after a natural disaster meet the needs of the 21st century.”

Senator Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr., said, “Families and businesses continue to face serious challenges as they rebuild and recover from one of the most devastating disasters in our state’s history. The Committee's preliminary recommendations are a first step to help address many of those challenges and ensure that New York is better prepared to respond to future disasters.”

Senator Lee Zeldin said, “This latest tour of storm damaged communities in the New York Metropolitan area was most informative. The damage wreaked by Hurricane Sandy is nothing short of staggering. The clean-up and rebuilding process is certain to be long and expensive. I am working closely with village, town and other local officials on Long Island who are still assessing the damage to ensure that we receive every dollar necessary to rebuild stronger than we were before Sandy first made landfall. Of particular importance, there seems to be a few insurance companies failing to timely and adequately compensate policy holders. This needs to be urgently corrected.”

The task force consists of Co-Chair Senator Andrew Lanza (R,I,C-Staten Island), Co-Chair Senator Malcolm A. Smith (D-Queens), Senator Diane Savino (D-Staten Island/Brooklyn), Senator Charles J.

Fuschillo Jr. (R-Merrick), Senator-Elect James Sanders, Jr. (D-Queens), Senator Jack Martins (R-Mineola), Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland), Senator Martin J. Golden (R-Brooklyn), Senator Joseph Addabbo Jr. (D-Queens), Senator Lee Zeldin (R,C,I-Shirley), and Senator Phil Boyle (R,C,I-Suffolk County).

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