

*Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024*

## **Remarks on Hurricane Milton Response and Recovery Efforts in St. Pete Beach, Florida**

*October 13, 2024*

*The President.* Hello, folks.

I just met a number of the homeowners, been wiped out, and the—everything from the Coast Guard to the fire department. It's a hell of a deal.

I'm here in Florida for the second time in 2 weeks and—to survey the damage from another catastrophic storm: Hurricane Milton. Thankfully, the storm's impact was not as cataclysmic as had—we had predicted. But on top of two [one; White House correction] before it, it just keeps—seem we got to get—getting worse.

And but—you know, but for some individuals, it was cataclysmic—all those folks who not only lost their homes, but more importantly, those folks who lost their lives, lost family members, lost all their personal belongings. Entire neighborhoods were flooded, and millions—millions—were without power.

Earlier this morning I did an aerial tour of St. Petersburg and the battered coastline. I flew over Tropicana Field and—where the Tampa Bays play—Rays play, and the roof was almost completely off. But, thank God, not many people were injured.

I spoke with first responders who have been working around the clock. I also met with small-business owners here and homeowners who have taken a real beating, with these back-to-back storms. And they're heartbroken and exhausted, and their expenses are piling up.

And I know from experience how devastating it is to lose your home. Several years ago, my home was struck by lightning. It didn't all burn down, but we were out of the home for 7 months while it was being repaired. The thing I was most concerned about was not just the home; it was all those things, all those—all those pictures I saved, my—and my daughter had drawn when she was little, all the family photographs, all the albums, all the things that really matter.

Folks, the fact is that when you lose your wedding ring and the old photos of your children, family keepsakes, things that can't be replaced—but sometimes, from my own experience, that's the part that hurts the most.

And I'm standing next to the mayor of Pete's Beach and the chairwoman, Peters. Both their homes were damaged in Hurricane Milton. The mayor's home flooded, family vehicles washed away. The county chair's home had experienced significant damage in the past two storms previous. They just finished rebuilding and settling back in, and now they have to do it all over again.

Both their families lost precious personal belongings, but they've stepped up not only to look out for themselves, but to help other families, help their neighbors. You know, that's the resilience of the people of West Florida.

And I want to thank them and all the public officials who have suffered consequential losses because of the storm, but who are out there doing things to help other people who have had serious losses. It matters. The American people should know the sacrifices they're making.

You know, they've been steadfast partners as well. We've been in frequent contact.

And it's in moments like this we come together to take care of each other, not as Democrats or Republicans, but as Americans: Americans who need help and Americans who would help you if you were in the same situation. We are one United States—one Unites States.

I also came here to talk about all the progress we have made together. This is a whole-of-Government effort, from State and local to FEMA to U.S. Coast Guard, Army Corps of Engineers, the Energy Department, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Defense, just to name a few.

FEMA has delivered 1.2 million meals, over 300,000 liters of water, 2 million gallons of fuel. And so far, we've installed 100 satellite terminals to restore communications in impacted areas so families can contact their loved ones to be sure everything is okay and be able to reach out for help as well.

Speaking of help, so far, we've opened 10 disaster recovery centers in Florida, with more to come, so people can have one stop to meet with officials, get the Federal help they're entitled to that's available to them, such as direct, immediate financial aid and no-interest [low-interest; White House correction] payment loans, mortgage relief, and so much more.

You can also go online to [disasterassistance.gov](https://disasterassistance.gov)—[disasterassistance.gov](https://disasterassistance.gov)—or call 1-800-621-FEMA—F-E-M-A. Yesterday, after I signed the major disaster declaration, more than 250,000 Floridians registered for help—250,000—the most in single—any—a single day ever in the history of this country—250,000.

I know you're concerned about the debris removal, and it's obvious why. We're prioritizing debris removal and working with the State and local partners to clear roads, to get wreckage into—of the two hurricanes off properties, and so more folks can return home and businesses can receive much-needed deliveries of food, fuel, medicine, and other essentials. That's a priority for me.

Power has also been restored to over 2 million people in a matter of days. And thanks to tens of thousands of power workers from 43 States and Canada working nonstop, even more people will have more power restored soon.

Today I'm proud to announce \$612 million to six new cutting-edge projects to support communities impacted by Hurricane Helene and Milton. That includes \$47 million for Gainesville Regional Utilities and another \$47 million for Florida Power and Light.

This funding will not only restore power, but it will make the region's power system stronger and more capable and reduce the frequency and duration of power outages while extreme weather events become more frequent.

In fact, we've been able to restore power quicker because of critical infrastructure investments were made both when I was Vice President and President to harden the grid. For folks at home, "the grid" means the electrical power system that transmits energy from the—where it's produced in a power plant to where it's used in homes and businesses.

We've been hardening the grid, like burying transmission lines underground, replacing wood power poles with concrete or composite poles so they don't snap in the wind.

Energy Secretary Granholm is here with me today and leading this effort, and she'll tell you more about it and other cutting-edge technologies on the grid in a moment.

Let me close with this. I'm here to personally say thank you to the brave first responders—and I don't want to underestimate that—brave first responders, men and women in uniform, utility workers. [*Inaudible*—look at the number that showed up from around the country—from Canada—California, Nebraska, all over the country—to come here to help.

Men and women in uniform, as I said; health care personnel; neighbors helping neighbors; and so many more people. This is all a team effort, folks. You made a big difference. And it's saved lives.

But there's much more to do, and we're going to do everything we can to get power back into your homes, not only helping you recover, but to help you build back stronger.

God bless you all, and may God protect our first responders and protect our troops.

Now I'm going to turn this over to Secretary Granholm. Madam Secretary.

*Secretary of Energy Jennifer M. Granholm.* Yes. Thank you, Mr. President.

*[At this point, Secretary Granholm made remarks; no transcript was provided.]*

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:34 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Adrian Petrila of St. Pete Beach; and Chair of the Board of County Commissioners Kathleen Peters of Pinellas County, FL. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 14.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Hurricane Milton, response and recovery efforts in St. Pete Beach, FL.

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