

Cut off by Helene in Western NC, Rep. Foxx calls for more aid for her district

BY DANIELLE BATTAGLIA
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Watauga,"
Foxx said.
"Watauga,
particularly
has been hit
very, very
hard."

For 19
years, Foxx
has repre-
sented in Congress the
counties around her Ban-
ner Elk home. Her 5th
Congressional District
currently encompasses
Alleghany, Ashe, Avery,
Caldwell, Davie, Forsyth,
Mitchell, Stokes, Surry,
Watauga, Wilkes, and
Yadkin counties.

Hurricane Helene
reached the U.S. Thurs-
day, near Perry, Florida,
as a Category 4 hurricane.
When it reached North
Carolina, on Friday, it had
been downgraded to a
tropical storm, but
dumped tens of inches of
rain on the mountains.

As of Monday, at least
120 people had died from
the storm throughout the
Southeast. And many
others remain unaccounted
for. It is unclear if
that's because they're
isolated, have no means of
communication or are
dead.

Over Foxx's house, 2
feet of rain fell, she said.
Banner Elk is home to
Lees-McRae College, and
has a population of just
over 1,000 people.

The most rainfall was
measured at Busick Raws
in nearby Yancey County,
where 29.5 inches fell,
The News & Observer
reported.

That's close to Mount
Mitchell, the highest peak
in the Appalachian Moun-
tains and east of the Mis-
sissippi River in the conti-
nental United States.

HELENE'S DEVASTATION

Rep. Chuck Edwards, a
Republican representing
the 11th Congressional
District, also spoke with
McClatchy on Monday
about the devastation
Helene left in its path
through the state.

"It begins with the fact
that so many roads are
closed and impassable,"
Edwards said.

Edwards said traffic has
to be routed around the

region. Smaller roads and
bridges have been washed
out.

"We've got communi-
ties here in the mountains
that are severed from
civilization, and they also
have no power, and they
have no cell service. They
literally are cut off from
the rest of the world."

People who can get out
lined up for more than
three hours to get gas, and
he worries that the region
will run out. A few grocery
stores can run on generators
but their food supplies
are low.

And then there are
those who can't be
reached.

"There's several we
have not heard from yet,"
Edwards said. "We don't
know their condition. Cell
service is sporadic at
best."

CELLPHONE OUTAGE

Foxx's cell phone cut in
and out, and then cut off,
as she spoke about the
devastation.

She called back, sound-
ing exasperated.

"One of the biggest
problems that we have
here is phone service,"
Foxx said. "We have peo-
ple isolated, all over who
don't have phone access."

Foxx said she's been
begging federal and state
agencies to get her coun-
ties access to Starlink, a
satellite internet company
owned by SpaceX, that
offers mobile broadband.

On Monday, the White
House announced that
every emergency operations
center in North
Carolina would be sent
Starlink satellite systems.

On Monday afternoon,
FEMA announced they
delivered 40 Starlink
systems to the state.

Foxx said lack of work-
ing cellphones was one of
the biggest frustrations
among lawmakers, first
responders and residents.
They aren't able to com-
municate about problems
throughout the area.

In the 11th District,
Canton Mayor Zeb Smathers
posted on social media his
"frustration and anger"
with cellphone providers,
saying they failed to
help his community when they
needed them the most.

"It is unacceptable and
disgusting that in our time
of need, cellular service
for the entire region is
blocked out," Smathers
told The Charlotte Observer.
"There's no excuse for that. I mean, we knew
the storm was coming."

Canton, a town with
fewer than 4,500 people,
is located 17 miles west of
Asheville.

In Foxx's district, she
said, an information tech-
nology employee in Ashe
County was able to con-
nect to Starlink. But other
counties had not.

And that concerns Foxx,
where she says there are
places with no access
to the outside world — like
Beech Mountain, home to
around 700 people.

"The only way to get to
Beech Mountain is by
helicopter," Foxx said.
"We've got communica-
tions with the manager
up there, but it is a big
issue, being able to talk to
people and getting suppli-
es to them."

MISSING PEOPLE

Mid-conversation,
Foxx's other phone rang.
"I don't need to take
that one," she said. "That
is somebody calling to tell
me they're worried about
me and praying for me."

That's a constant for
people living in Western
North Carolina.

And something Foxx
says she really appreciates
right now.

When Foxx isn't assess-
ing the damage, she's
been in her office making
calls.

Foxx and other mem-
bers of Congress were
among those who wrote to
Biden asking for him to
declare a major disaster.

On Saturday, Biden an-
nounced he had approved
the declaration, which
offers grants for tempo-
rary housing and home
repairs, low-cost loans to
cover uninsured property
losses and programs to help
individuals and business
owners.

On Monday, Biden
announced in a news con-
ference that FEMA Ad-
ministrator Deanne Cris-
well would be staying in
the Asheville area for the
foreseeable future. He

said he, too, plans to trav-
el to North Carolina on
Wednesday.

There's been some
criticism that Congress
left town Wednesday after
passing a temporary fund-
ing measure but not the 12
appropriation bills needed
to fund the federal gov-
ernment. Edwards noted
how close Congress came
to another government
shutdown and where his
district would be today.

Canton, a town with
fewer than 4,500 people,
had that happened. Con-
gress plans to be out until
after the November election.

On Monday, Biden said
he is considering calling
Congress back into ses-
sion. But Foxx said there's
more Biden can do without
Congress, like spending
unused COVID-19 relief
money on storm relief
efforts.

Foxx said she wanted to
see more from Gov. Roy
Cooper's office.

In Avery County, only
six members of the Na-
tional Guard were on the
ground, she said Monday.

"We don't have enough
National Guard," Foxx
said. "It's one of the most
effective relief organiza-
tions anywhere in the
world, maybe the most
effective. When Samaritan's
Purse is on the ground, then we all feel
better."

And Foxx said people
looking to come to West-
ern North Carolina to help
should find an organiza-
tion to volunteer with like
Samaritan's Purse. She
warned that people should
not try to help on their
own.

"We don't need people
just going out on their own
and trying to help because
they don't know the sit-
uation here, and it's really
dangerous for people to be
trying to do things," Foxx
said. "Roads are still cav-
ing in everywhere, and so
it would be better for
them to work through an
established organization."

She suggested contact-
ing the local emergency
management agency
where a person wanting to
volunteer lives, to ask that
county what is needed.

And she urged those
wanting to help to donate
to a reputable organiza-
tion, and call their legisla-
tors or members of Con-
gress to encourage the
White House and Cooper's
office to do everything
needed.

Danielle Battaglia:
[@dani_battaglia](https://www.instagram.com/dani_battaglia)

that it's nothing compared
to what some of his neigh-
bors are dealing with, with
homes and businesses lost
for good.

"I certainly see the
community coming toge-
ther," Edwards said.

"Folks in the mountains
are prideful and resilient.
Our law enforcement and
first responders are com-
ing together in a big way.
We're seeing more and
more neighbors helping
one another, checking on
neighbors, seeing that
they've got some of the
basic things they need,
sawing trees out of the
way, so that their neigh-
bors' cars can get by."

That uplifted Edwards,
despite his frustration with
state and federal leaders.

Next on Foxx's schedule
was to go to Samaritan's
Purse, a humanitarian aid
organization based in
Boone. There volunteers
had come from across the
country to help with relief
efforts and she wanted to
thank them for their work.

"We've very grateful to
Samaritan's Purse," Foxx
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Port workers strike on East and Gulf coasts

BY PETER EAVIS
NYT News Service

For the first time in nearly 50 years, longshoremen on the East and Gulf coasts went on strike Tuesday, a move that will cut off most trade through some of the busiest U.S. ports and could send a chill through the economy.

Members of the International Longshoremen's Association union, which represents roughly 45,000 workers, started setting up pickets after eleventh-hour talks failed to avert a work stoppage.

"Nothing's going to move without us - nothing," said Harold J. Daggett, the president of the union, addressing picketers outside a port terminal in Elizabeth, New Jersey, in a video posted early Tuesday to a union Facebook account.

The United States Maritime Alliance, which represents port employers, declined to comment early Tuesday. The two sides were not able to agree on wage increases, and the use of new technology in the ports was a sticking point for the union.

"We think they're lowballing intentionally," Leonard Riley, a longshoreman at the Port of Charleston in South Car-

olina, said Tuesday. "We
are going to be out until we
have something to chew
on."

Businesses now face a
period of uncertainty.

Trade experts say that a
short strike would cause
little lasting damage but
that a weeklong stoppage
could lead to shortages,
higher prices and even
layoffs.

"When we talk about a
two- to three-week strike,"
said J. Bruce Chan, a trans-
portation analyst at Stifel, a
Wall Street firm, "that's
when the problem starts to
get exponentially worse."

The prospect of significant
economic damage from a
strike puts President Joe Biden in
a quandary five weeks before
national elections. Before
the strike, he said he was
not going to use a federal
labor law to force an end to
a port shutdown - something
President George W. Bush did in 2002 - but
some labor experts said he
might use that power if the
strike started to weigh on
the economy. White House
officials had pressed both
sides to reach a deal before
the strike.

Longshoremen move
containers off ships, sort
them and put them on
trucks or trains, and handle
bulk cargo, too. Around
three-fifths of the nation's
container shipments go

through ports on the East
and Gulf coasts, including
the Port of New York and
New Jersey, the third busi-
est in the country, and
fast-growing ports in Vir-
ginia, Georgia and Texas.

A strike will also stop the
shipment of cars and heavy
machinery through the
Port of Baltimore, where
operations were curtailed
for most of the spring after
a container ship crashed
into the Francis Scott Key
Bridge.

Automakers said that
they were monitoring the
strike but that it was too
early to say how it would
hit them.

Cruise ship operations
are unaffected by the
strike, and military ship-
ments will continue. Rick
Cotton, the executive direc-
tor of the Port Authority of
New York and New Jersey,
said Monday that around 100,000 contain-
ers would be stored at the
port during the strike and
that 35 ships arriving over
the next week would be
anchored offshore.

"The stakes are very
high," Gov. Kathy Hochul
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continue the legacy of her
predecessor, and her win
was seen by many as a
clear vote of confidence in
López Obrador and the party
he started, Morena.

In Mexico, a country
steeped in machismo
where 7 in every 10 women
have experienced some
form of violence, Shein-
baum's inauguration is a
milestone and a symbol for
many of women's empower-
ment.

Former climate scientist
and Mexico City mayor,
Sheinbaum won in a
landslide in general elec-
tions in June, and is suc-
ceeding her mentor, Andrés
Manuel López Obrador, as
president of the world's largest Spanish-
speaking nation - and the
United States' top trading
partner.

Sheinbaum, a leftist,
campaigned on a vow to

amendments proposed by
López Obrador.

Here is what to know
about Mexico's new presi-
dent.

**Q: Who is Claudia
Sheinbaum?**

A: She