

Clay County GOP election season events scheduled

October 10, 2024 | Clay County Progress (NC) Author: Barbara Deas; Guest Writer | Section: News | 664 Words Page: B3 OpenURL Link

As hurricane Helene approached western North Carolina the Clay County GOP canceled the annual Picnic and Candidates Rally that was scheduled for Sept. 28. Little did we know that our guest speakers (candidates) would be out serving their constituents in a time of need that day. Many of us as ordinary citizens, while counting our blessings for being largely spared were also spending our time helping our surrounding neighbors. Our prayers and assistance continue to go to friends and family in the communities impacted by this devastating storm.

Many of you have supported our 2024 raffle fundraiser by purchasing a ticket for a chance to win the shotgun that is on display at our headquarters. The winner was to be drawn at the September picnic so this month we will draw the winner at the regular October meeting. You do not have to be present to win.

The Clay County Republican Party will hold their meeting on at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 17 upstairs in the Community Services Building. The meeting is open to all Clay County Republicans and unaffiliated voters. Light refreshments, snacks and desserts will begin the evening and attendees are encouraged to bring a covered dish, snack or dessert to share. The business meeting will follow at 7 p.m. The Community Services Building is located at 25 Riverside Drive.

The silent auction fundraiser that usually takes place during the picnic and rally has also been extended. Items are on display at the GOP headquarters and are available for you to review and leave your bid. Items up for auction include: beauty services and massage courtesy of Dove Profiles; a "Kid's Delight Box" of goodies; handmade necklace and earring set, plus a set of garnet earrings; a "Football Fan" snack basket; a padded hammock courtesy of George's Hardware; a custom handmade black and red purse (with Trump poster); a hand-carved, lighted artificial pumpkin with Trump carved into it (with a Trump poster); a red, white and blue quilt; a gift certificate for teeth whitening and exam courtesy of Dr. Jason Shook; a knife collection, courtesy of Randy Hale and a beautiful oil painting.

The final auction bids will be accepted and items awarded at the Clay County GOP Election Watch Party from 8-10 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 5. The watch party will be held at West Tubing Company, 6175 Old Highway 64 West, Warne, N.C. Hosts June and Dave West will be grilling hamburgers and hot dogs for the attendees courtesy of the Clay County Republican Party. Beverages will be available and attendees are encouraged to bring a side dish, snack or dessert to share. Bring the family, relax and enjoy the evening as the country awaits the 2024 election returns.

Also canceled due to the devastation suffered in most of our surrounding District 11 counties was the Patriotic/Trump Road Rally that was scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 5. We appreciate all the patriots who signed up to be a part of this event. The rally destination site in Maggie Valley is currently being well-used as a donation distribution site.

Tickets for the 2024 Clay County GOP Christmas Party are available and will go on sale starting at the October monthly meeting. This year's event will be held at 5:30 p.m. on Dec. 6 at Epic Catering and Eatery, 714 NC-69. Tickets are \$35 per person and additional details will be available prior to the party.

Watch for the announcement in next week's Clay County Progress of another October special event at our GOP headquarters. In the meantime, stop in and pick up your Republican sample ballot, information on the Republican slate of candidates, yard signs, plus there is a selection of great merchandise. The headquarters is located between Anejo's Restaurant and Hayesville Grill in Creekside Plaza on Highway 69. For details contact the Clay County GOP headquarters at (828) 541-3991 or Barbara Deas at (678) 644-5561.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Barbara Deas, Guest Writer, 'Clay County GOP election season events scheduled', *Clay County Progress* (online), 10 Oct 2024 B3 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1DE4EF70B52E8



Be among those showing our best sides

October 10, 2024 | Clay County Progress (NC) Author: Mike Whitney | Section: Sports | 653 Words Page: B2 OpenURL Link

Whatever your views on the election or the long shoreman strike or the war in the Middle East, one thing area residents can all agree on is our incredible luck that hurricane Helene spared Clay County the devastation of Asheville. There is the total destruction of Chimney Rock, debris of which is now filling Lake Lure and other small towns in North Carolina, 400 miles from the primary Florida incursion. Towns are gone and many people are still missing.

As so often happens in times like these many people show their best sides, volunteering, donating, bringing in private aircraft full of essentials, even teams of mules where nothing else can get through. Up to 1, 000 active duty soldiers are joining the N.C. National Guard. So far, half the total storm deaths are in our home state of North Carolina. That number is certain to increase as more bodies are discovered and identified. If a few items are out of stock at the grocery store, that inconvenience is minor compared to no drinking water, no food, no stores, no traffic in or out, no home, no bed and no vehicle. Let's all try to be kind, respectful and show some gratitude with extra thanks to those working to help.

Sometimes certain songs I've never heard before strike a chord for me in my heart with such power that it just makes me feel so thankful and humble that I've made it this far on my life's journey. I am living my dream of playing music live, with a small trip.

Being a small part of a musical art path with an 81-year old hysterically funny and gifted singer songwriter Mike Whitney. Whitney writes and puts the music to all his endless amounts of original songs. Marcus Bales is Whitney's co-writer who writes a poem or something that he can turn into a song. Bales, you are an amazing artist.

I can't believe I get to play Cajun with Karl Engelmann on fretless bass. Engelmann, you are the best. Your restaurant, Epic Catering and Eatery/Mel's Place, fine dining now with a full bar and top shelf liquor is in my opinion, the jewel food joint and live music venue in these beautiful mountains. Don't wake me up. I love this dream.

Tommy Kirchner played with Mike Whitney and Borderline Behavior at Epic during September. Thanks, Tommy.

More thoughts It has been one of the greatest and most difficult years of my life. I learned everything is temporary. Moments. Feelings. People. Flowers. I learned love is about giving everything and letting it hurt. I learned vulnerability is always the right choice because it is easy to be cold in a world that makes it so very difficult to remain soft.

I learned all things come in twos, life and death, pain and joy, sugar and salt, me and you. It is the balance of the universe. It has been the year of hurting so bad but living so good, making friends out of strangers, making strangers out of friends. We must learn to focus on warm energy, always. Soak our limbs in it and become better lovers to the world.

"If we can't learn to be kinder to each other how will we ever learn to be kinder to the most desperate parts of ourselves."

- Rupi Kaur Rupi Kaur is a Canadian poet, illustrator, photographer and author. Born in Punjab, India, Kaur immigrated to Canada at a young age with her family. She began performing poetry in 2009 and rose to fame on Instagram, eventually becoming a popular poet through her three collections of poetry.

- Wikipedia Last words "Even on the highest throne in the world we are still sitting on our ass."
- Michel de Montaigne (1533 -1592) "Never spend your money before you have it."
- Thomas Jefferson "The entire economy of the Western world is built on things that cause cancer."
- From the 1985 movie "Bliss" Email Mike Whitney at: mikelivhitney@gmail.com

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Mike Whitney, 'Be among those showing our best sides', *Clay County Progress* (online), 10 Oct 2024 B2 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1DE4EF23E7CE0



Hinton leads community-wide flood bucket collection

October 10, 2024 | Clay County Progress (NC) Author: Rev. Karen Kluever; Guest Writer | Section: News | 434 Words Page: B4 OpenURL Link

On Tuesday, Oct. i, 21 local residents gathered for a "Community Collaborative Flood Relief" information session hosted by Hinton Rural Life Center. As an extension of their safe and healthy homes initiative that includes a year-round home repair ministry, Hinton is coordinating a collaborative effort involving churches, organizations, businesses, individuals, neighborhoods and others in Clay, Cherokee and Tovms counties to assemble flood buckets or cleaning kits in response to the devastation caused by Helene. These cleaning kits contain very specific supplies that are essential for cleaning homes and structures impacted by water damage, according to the United Methodist Committee on Relief which vnll be distributing the cleaning kits in western North Carolina.

"UMCOR has been on the front lines of disaster response in this country for decades and are experts in these types of relief efforts," said Hinton CEO and President Jacqueline Gottlieb who led the information session and is coordinating the flood relief project. "The guidance provided by UMCOR, such as what goes in the flood buckets and how to assemble them has been time and experience tested. We are fortunate to be working through UMCOR on the assembly and distribution of these cleaning kits in westem North Carolina." Individuals and groups who want to participate in this community-wide relief project have the option to gather their own donations and supplies and assemble cleaning kits, then deliver them to Hinton along with any extra supplies or they can bring cleaning kit supplies to Hinton's Educational Tool Barn and help assemble the kits on days and times to be scheduled, is tentatively set for the second weekend of October. The Tool Barn is located at the corner of Hinton Center Road and Retreat Drive across from the Clay County Food Pantry.

Hinton is also accepting financial donations to purchase supplies in bulk and cover shipping/transportation costs. Estimated costs are \$75 for a cleaning kit and \$3 for shipping. Financial donations (cash/check) to Hinton Rural Life Center can be dropped off at Hinton from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday or made online through PayPal or credit card at: www.hintoncenter. org/donate/. Note "Hurricane Relief." 100 percent of the financial donation goes to purchase supplies and cover shipping costs.

To be notified of the dates and times for packing the cleaning kits/flood buckets, email: jeremy@hintoncenter. org with your name, county and put "Hurricane Relief in the subject. For details about the Community Collaborative Cleaning Kits project, including a list of the specific supplies needed per bucket and a brief video, visit: https://hintoncenter.org/community-collaborative-flood-reliefproject/.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Rev. Karen Kluever, Guest Writer, 'Hinton leads community-wide flood bucket collection', *Clay County Progress* (online), 10 Oct 2024 B4 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1DE4EFA9C3A08>



Voter registration Friday deadline approaching for general election

October 10, 2024 | Clay County Progress (NC) Author: Patrick Gannon; NCSBE Public Information Director | Section: News | 626 Words Page: B3 OpenURL Link

Eligible individuals who want to cast their ballot by mail or on Election Day, Nov. 5, must register to vote by 5 p.m. Friday, Oct. 11. Individuals who miss that deadline may register and vote at the same time during the 17-day, inperson early voting period at any early voting site in their county. The early voting period begins Thursday, Oct. 17 and ends Saturday, Nov. 2. County-by-county early voting sites and schedules are available at the State Board of Elections' Early Voting Site Search.

Important note: Some sites and schedules are likely to change in some counties affected by Hurricane Helene. If you live in one of those counties, check the Early Voting Site Search closer to the start of early voting.

Under state law, the regular voter registration deadline is 25 days before an election. Deadlines are different for military and overseas voters. Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 5. "We encourage all eligible individuals to register and vote for this important election," said Karen Brinson Bell, executive director of the State Board of Elections. "Registering is easy and there is still time to register to make your voice heard."

How to register To register, eligible individuals have the following options: · If you have a North Carolina's driver's license or other NCDMV identification, you may submit a voter registration application online. Learn more at Complete Your Registration Online Through the DMV. Eligible individuals may also register in person at DMV offices.

· Any eligible resident can complete a Voter Registration Application in English or Spanish on paper and return it to their county board of elections office by 5 p.m. Friday, Oct. 11.

Voter registration forms that are placed in the mail by the Oct. 11 deadline will still be processed for this election if they are received by the registrant's county board of elections with a postmark showing the form was placed in the mail by Oct. 11. If the postmark is missing or unreadable, then the form will be processed only if it is received by Wednesday, Oct. 16.

North Carolina residents may not register to vote on Election Day, unless they become eligible after the Oct. 11 registration deadline due to becoming a United States citizen or having their rights restored following a felony conviction. Requirements for registering To register to vote, a person: · Must be a United States citizen. · Will have lived at the North Carolina residence identified on their registration form for 30 days before Election Day. · Must be at least 18 years old or will be by the date of the general election.

· Must not be currently serving a felony sentence, including any period of probation, post-release supervision or parole. Updating your registration Voters who need to update their existing voter registration may use the DMV website or a regular voter registration application.

Those with a North Carolina driver's license or other DMV identification may update their residential or mailing address and party affiliation through the DMV online service but may not change their name through that service.

If using the paper application to update a registration, it must be signed and mailed to the voter's county board of elections by Oct. 11. Updates to name, address (if within the county) and party affiliation must be signed, but can be provided by fax or email to your county board of elections. If a voter is using the paper form to update their residential address to a new county, they must return the paper form by mail or in person. Registered voters may also update an existing registration at an early voting site during the early voting period. For details on registering to vote in North Carolina, see Registering. For details on voting as a college student, see Registering as a College

Student.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Patrick Gannon, NCSBE Public Information Director, 'Voter registration Friday deadline approaching for general election', *Clay County Progress* (online), 10 Oct 2024 B3 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1DE4EF4E79058>



Steins & Wine supports main street organizations

October 10, 2024 | Clay County Progress (NC) Author: Sandy Zimmerman; Guest Writer | Section: News | 404 Words Page: B5 OpenURL Link

The 11th annual Steins & Wine event on Saturday, Oct. 5 brought area breweries and wine makers into town with more than 400 attendees to enjoy a beautiful evening inside the Hayesville Square. A variety of beer and wine was available along with additional vendors featuring their craft or non-alcohol products.

The annual gathering has grown each year since it began in 2013 as the first to support an area event featuring vineyards and their products. Hayesville was selected for the N.C. Small Town Main Street program the same year and more small businesses eventually opened with ability to sell beer and wine. Area breweries soon arrived to also become part of the supply chain and increased business for area restaurants. Support has continued with gold, silver or bronze sponsors including businesses and community groups.

Historic Hayesville Inc. is the nonprofit arm of Small Town Main Street and continues Steins & Wine Around the Square each year on the first Saturday of October as a major fundraiser.

Proceeds from previous years have supported downtown or partner projects including the historic courthouse to become Beal Center, repairs to the Old Jail Museum and renovating the 1930's Old Town Hall as a small classroom.

Several of the small towns in the same program as Hayesville have suffered catastrophic damage from hurricane Helene. HHI Board of Directors and supporting sponsors have agreed to send monetary proceeds from this year's event to a similar small western North Carolina town with selection guidance from the N.C. Department of Commerce Main Street organization.

HHI is thankful for all the support provided with participation by sponsors, volunteers and attendees making a local contribution possible to help others recover from such devastation. The Centennial Exhibit at 116 Sanderson St. is open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays. Visit: www.historichayesvilleinc. com to donate via PayPal, volunteer or support HHI projects.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Sandy Zimmerman, Guest Writer, 'Steins & Wine supports main street organizations', *Clay County Progress* (online), 10 Oct 2024 B5 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1DE4F069378C0



Your Views

October 10, 2024 | Clay County Progress (NC)

Section: News | 1600 Words

Page: A5
OpenURL Link

Is the Democratic Party really the defender of our country's democracy? Twelve-year-old Jocelyn Nungaray left her home in Houston, Texas and walked to a nearby convenience store. Security video shows her leaving later with three men. Her body naked from the waist down with hands and feet bound, was later found discarded in a nearby bayou. Houston police charged two Venezuelan illegal aliens with capital murder and possible sexual assault.

Rachel Morin, a mother to five children left her home in Bel Air, Md. to walk a nearby trail. According to Rachel's mother she was dragged through the woods, raped, strangled and stuffed into a drainpipe. Police have charged an illegal alien from El Salvador with first degree rape and murder. Laken Riley, a 22-year-old nursing student was murdered while jogging on the University of Georgia campus in Athens, Ga. Police have charged an illegal alien from Venezuela with murder, kidnapping and other crimes. Last month Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents arrested four illegal aliens in Nantucket, Mass. and charged them with various sex crimes. Two of the four were charged with multiple sex crimes against minors including rape and indecent assault and battery.

I wish these horrific crimes were isolated incidences, however they aren't even a drop of water into an empty bucket. On Sept. 25, the ICE director sent a letter to Congressman Tony Gonzales revealing that as of July 21, ICE agents had encountered 662, 566 non-citizen criminals at United States border ports of entry. Of this number, 425, 431 convicted criminals and 222, 141 others charged with a crime were placed on the ICE non-detained docket and released into the United States. Of the 425, 431 convicted criminals released, 13, 088 were convicted of murder, 15, 811 for sexual assault and 9, 461 for other sex offenses. Of the 222, 141 charged with a crime and released, 1, 845 were charged with murder and 4, 250 with sexual assault.

According to the Biden/Harris Democrat administration approximately 10 million illegal aliens have entered the United States. Of that number about two million are identified as got-aways, persons who have entered the United States and have managed to escape ICE processing. Democrats have no idea who these people are, what countries they come from and their reason for entering. How many are smuggling in fentanyl or other illegal drugs that kill tens of thousands of Americans each year, how many women and children are smuggled in and forced into sex trafficking, how many terrorists are waiting to unleash attacks on our schools, communities, hospitals and critical infrastructure? Think of the Hamas attacks in Israel a year ago.

One of the first duties of any government is to protect its citizens. Democrat leadership has intentionally failed to honor this sacred obligation. Why? Because leadership knows that a percentage of illegals imported into America are registering and will vote Democrat. Leadership at both national and state levels are Marxist (socialist/communist) who wish to fundamentally transform America. If thousands of Americas are murdered, raped and our borders intentionally left wide open, then so be it. For Democrat leadership the ends (retaining power) justify the means (sacrificing Americans citizens).

Jim Johnson IRA is a key example of effective climate legislation Americans would support Hurricane Helene's devastating effects underscore the deep connection between life in the mountains of North Carolina and human-induced climate change. Previously our inland region was not typically considered at high risk for climate related extreme weather but this event has exposed our vulnerability.

As global temperatures rise the dial on extreme weather events also cranks up. Most Americans support government action to mitigate the growing threat of climate change yet the stark contrast between our two political parties on this issue is impossible to ignore.

The passage of the Inflation Reduction Act is a key example of the Democrats' efforts to create effective climate legislation. This legislation allows us to strengthen our economy while also encouraging deployment of clean energy resources. This administration has also re-established the United States as a global leader in cooperation to fight climate change and securing a sustainable future for us and our children.

In contrast the Republican stance dismisses the overwhelming scientific consensus on climate change, labeling it a hoax. Gaslighting Americans is not enough. They plan to throw away current progress and burn it to the ground. Project 2025 specifies how the GOP, given the chance will repeal the IRA, gut the Environmental Protection Agency and make severe cuts to the Department of Energy. The plan also targets NOAA and the National Weather Service to be dismantled and downsized with the goal of eliminating research efforts. The overall result of their plan would be to completely destroy the integrity of climate science in the United States and endanger global climate efforts.

In this scenario, fossil fuel industries would be given free rein to pollute, their political backers would profit, while the rest of us and the planet would bear the consequences.

David Miller Handicapping a presidential horse race: Harris versus Trump 2024 Re: Progress Oct. 3, "Still undecided for president." An unbiased opinion from that group is like finding a PETA member in favor of eating pets. They all have "an ax to grind."

In March of 2022 Kamala Harris stated to the DNC, "Democrats should be reminded that they got what they voted for." Did she mean unaffordable prices, high interest, record inflation, the Ukraine war, immigration, the Afghanistan withdrawal, the Israeli/Hamas war, record crime and a California cost of living now 38 percent higher than the national average and housing 97 percent higher? Visit: https://www.rentcafe.com/cost-of-living-calculator/us/ca/

What are Harris' positions, truthfully? In horse racing parlance, Harris is a "dark horse. How a horse will perform is predictable by paying attention to its pedigree and training. Harris was raised in Berkley, Calif, described as the most liberal, progressive, city in the United States. Our opinions are imbued by relatives, schools and the community in which we were raised. In the '60s Berkley was the home of drugs, rock and roll, hippies, flower children and a free sex revolution. So it was not all bad.

Wrote MSNBC columnist Robyn Autry, Harris claims Oakland as her home but she only lived there for two years."Yes, Harris gains bona fides from being associated with a city that symbolizes black workingclass grit and activism and not the image of white elitism and radicalism associated with San Francisco but especially Berkeley."

California is a state of liberal extremism: https://apnews.com/ article/san-franciscoblack-reparations-apology-8967c828a52c8ce6ac-08c77027a23i87. Despite a \$68 billion deficit in the 2024-2025 California budget "The African American Reparations Advisory Committee also proposed that every eligible black adult receive a \$5 million lump-sum cash payment and a guaranteed income of nearly \$100, 000 a year to remedy San Francisco's deep racial wealth gap." Harris is on record supporting reparations. California Senator Dahle states that California went from a loo-billion-dollar surplus to a \$73-billion deficit since Newsom took office in 2019. Harris and Newsom are "birds of a feather" when it comes to spending and liberal policies.

To court unions, Biden walked the UAW picket line. As we approach the elections in a grand middle finger salute to Biden, 45, 000 longshoremen went on strike. A prolonged job action will surely have a negative effect on your wallet. In 2022 Biden forced the railway union back to work. Thus, we know that if it suits him Biden is not averse to "strike busting."

At the outset Biden gave the "green light" to the dock workers assuring them he would not invoke the Taft Hartley Act. The obvious conclusion is that Biden and Harris are more concerned about 45, 000 union votes than the wellbeing of 333 million United States citizens.

When you check the box for Harris/Walz remember that Dick Cheney and Mitt Romney do not give a hoot about you.

Donald Robert Absolute power corrupts absolutely Although this quote is attributed to 19th century British politician Lord Acton, surely its truth stirred the hearts of the founding fathers of our American experiment in self government. Separation of powers, the rule of law, checks and balances, separation of church and state were specifically designed to limit power. Nation states, kingships and religious institutions that came before, possessed and often abused absolute power.

Political states when aligned with religious creeds, operated as theocracies. For hundreds of years the Spanish and Roman inquisitions demanded absolute religious allegiance, conversion or death by flame to those in its grasp. Wars between competing kingdoms, aligned with competing forms of Christian religion killed more than 30 percent of Europe's inhabitants between 1570 and 1700. No wonder thousand's fled to a new world free of men wielding absolute power, either political or religious. Today autocracy is increasing worldwide.

Democracy is messy and demanding, often requiring painful compromise yet better than the alternatives. American far right voices from Steve Bannon to Project 2025, are arguing for an all-powerful president and government entirely of his loyalists. Putin and Xi Jinping have that. Our enemies in WWII had that. Some call for a new Christian theocracy. Problem is the Divine Theocrat hasn't returned yet and flawed men claiming to speak for him just won't do, never have and never will.

The Christianity I learned is living a life of kindness and humility, unhypocritical and gracious enough to be worth following; being in the world yet not of it. Giving any man unlimited power ends in corruption and abuse even if he jokes of only being dictator on day one. Trump's fixation with personal power and personal retribution becoming both king and grandinguisitor is disturbing at best. "Hang Mike Pence" may have only been the preview of more horrors to come. James Messmer

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• Citation (aglc Style)

'Your Views', *Clay County Progress* (online), 10 Oct 2024 A5 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1DE4ECCF71F50>



Helene: Amid catastrophe, good news on Christmas trees

October 10, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Alan Wooten | The Center Square | Section: State | 784 Words OpenURL Link

(The Center Square) – About a week or so after Election Day every year, the aroma in the cool air begins to change downtown in the 1,300-population community of West Jefferson in the North Carolina mountains.

Fraser firs by the truck and trailer load, most open-air, are hauled into central distribution sites to be loaded onto 18-wheelers and taken throughout the country. If 27,000-population Ashe County were a state, it would rank No. 2 in the nation for Christmas tree production.

There's really nothing quite like it in a town at 3,000 feet above sea level that draws tourists with a love of arts and cheeses. Amid the catastrophic devastation of Hurricane Helene, there is some good news coming from the High Country.

"We do not expect the aftermath of Hurricane Helene to have a significant effect on the supply of real North Carolina Fraser fir Christmas trees this holiday season," Jennifer Greene, executive director of the North Carolina Christmas Trees Association, told The Center Square. "Christmas tree farmers are resilient, and they possess the grit and determination to overcome the most challenging circumstances."

Even considering eastern North Carolina hurricanes such as the 500-year flooding from Floyd in 1999 and Hazel in 1954, the lone Category 4 to ever hit the coast, Helene is arguably going to be the state's worst disaster. At least 88 are believed dead in the state and 230 in six southeastern states; possibly 100 or more remain missing as search and recovery enters a gruesome third week in the Appalachians; and water, power and soon heated homes are challenges.

"It is still too soon to connect with farmers in the hardest hit areas of the western region," Carrie McClain, CEO of Hart-T-Tree Farms in Ashe County, told The Center Square. "The infrastructure is devastated.

"Driving around and talking to some, it does not look like Christmas trees were damaged. There was some flooding in fields and a few growers have reported damage to seedlings and nurseries. The biggest concern for some growers will be road access – "Can I get the trees out of the field." But I think the majority will be able to get their trees out."

At 2 p.m. Thursday, DriveNC.org reported 628 road closures statewide from Helene. The breakdown is three interstates, 46 federal highways, 54 state roads and 525 secondary roads. The number is climbing, up six in 48 hours, as search and rescue moves to the cusp of a third week.

"At this point, we are still gathering information from our farmers regarding the extent that their farms were impacted by the storm," Greene said. "The next step will be working together to create a plan for harvest and shipping as we prioritize the safety and welfare of our farmers, their families, and their workers."

Though the road is long and the next month likely to be short, Greene said support from neighbors, friends, volunteers from various areas and states has been tremendous. Included are the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, local N.C. State University Cooperative Extension Centers, elected officials, and partner organizations, she said.

"We have a long way to go, but we have every confidence that in November, we will welcome our faithful friends to our local choose and cut farms and our wholesale Christmas trees will be on their way down the mountain, ready to help families celebrate the merriest season of all," Greene said. "Many have asked how they can support Christmas

tree farmers in western North Carolina. Be sure to buy a real Christmas tree, preferably a North Carolina Fraser fir, but any real tree helps support what we dedicate our lives to do."

McClain, in the county that borders both Virginia and Tennessee, said the hardest hit regions are Avery County and south as well as the western edges of Watauga and Ashe.

Avery is another big production county.

North Carolina is No. 2 nationally in Christmas tree production behind Oregon. An estimate could not be obtained from the Agriculture Department on how much it contributes to the state's \$111.1 billion agriculture and agribusiness industry – the state's No. 1 – but recent reports indicate it is likely between one-quarter and one-half billion dollars.

"I don't think the consumers will notice anything different," McClain said. "But consumers can help western North Carolina farmers by buying a real tree this season. Tell your friends and family near and far that purchasing a real Christmas tree this holiday season – wherever it comes from – helps western North Carolina farmers.

"Our biggest competitor is artificial trees – and they have an unfair advantage since they go into the stores long before real trees do. The purchase of a real tree, whether from North Carolina or not, keeps our industry strong."

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Alan Wooten | The Center Square, 'Helene: Amid catastrophe, good news on Christmas trees', *Courier-Times, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C247984DDA43C0



Helene: North Carolina death toll 88, 100 estimated missing

October 10, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Alan Wooten | The Center Square | Section: State | 504 Words OpenURL Link

(The Center Square) - Eighty-eight are reported dead and more than 100 may be unaccounted for in North Carolina.

No stranger to hurricanes, a 10-term congresswoman says her beloved mountain region has seen "nothing like this."

Hurricane Helene came ashore in Florida on Sept. 26 and eventually dumped what seems like a Biblical proportion of rain on the Appalachian Mountains. U.S. Rep. Virginia Foxx, R-N.C., told Fox News Radio on Thursday, "It's really one of the saddest things I have ever seen."

Helene has killed at least 230 across six southeastern states, the fourth most in the last three-quarters of a century. Only Katrina (2005, deaths 1,392), Audrey (1957, deaths 416) and Camille (1969, deaths 256) were worse.

In the interview with Jessica Rosenthal, Foxx shared the range of emotions hurricane recovery elicits and is more commonly known in the eastern part of her state. The biggest difference is indeed location, where rugged mountain terrain and October's steady drop in temperature combined with the loss of infrastructure in a way rarely experienced.

At 2 p.m. Thursday, DriveNC.org reported 628 road closures statewide from Helene. The breakdown is three interstates, 46 federal highways, 54 state roads and 525 secondary roads. The number is climbing, up six in 48 hours, as search and rescue moves to the cusp of a third week.

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper on Thursday signed legislation authorized by the General Assembly a day prior that appropriated \$273 million in state aid. Lawmakers said it's the first of many fiscal steps.

"The temperature is predicted to drop here in the Boone, Banner Elk, Blowing Rock area down to 36 degrees next week," Foxx said, speaking of a time that is usually the end of peak "leaf season." "I have told people we often have a major snowstorm around Halloween. It turns cold usually the end of October.

"So, I am very concerned that people will not have heat in their homes because many of them heated with outside heat coming into the home, kerosene or oil or propane. And that's going to be a major issue, getting heat into people's homes so they can be warm."

The number unaccounted for has become somewhat elusive. On Tuesday afternoon, the newspaper in Asheville reported more than five dozen in the Lake Lure and Chimney Rock communities alone.

"I keep hearing the number over 100 that are unaccounted for," Foxx said. "I don't know whether that's in my area or down west from me, but in my area, I think there are still many people that we haven't been able to get to because of the washout of the roads."

And yet, help has poured in from government agencies both federal and state, and untold volunteers.

"There are people stranded who can't get out," Foxx said. "There are folks who are going in and helping every way they can.

"Utility workers, first responders, firefighters, all the fire departments are the hubs of the little communities that are out there. So everybody's working very well together. It warms your heart to see individual citizens doing what

they're doing."

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Alan Wooten | The Center Square, 'Helene: North Carolina death toll 88, 100 estimated missing', *Courier-Times, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C24798411FA8A0



U.S. Scrambles to Find Hospital IV Fluids After Helene Damages NC Plant

October 10, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Health | 963 Words OpenURL Link

Key Takeaways

Damage from hurricanes Helene and Milton are disrupting production of vital IV fluids at plants in North Carolina and Florida, triggering shortagesThese fluids are essential to dialysis patients, premature babies and many others who require them for hydration and feedingManufacturers and the federal government are scrambling to boost supply from overseas

THURSDAY, Oct. 10, 2024 (HealthDay News) -- After Hurricane Helene knocked out a North Carolina production plant for a major supplier of IV fluids for U.S. hospitals, officials said the federal government is reaching out internationally to help restore supply.

The situation could get even worse: As Hurricane Milton barreled down on Florida, a second IV fluid maker's facility in Daytona Beach was in its crosshairs, the New York Times reported.

Together, the Baxter plant in Marion, N.C., and the B. Braun plant in Daytona Beach manufacture about 60% and 25%, respectively, of the nation's supply of IV fluids. These fluids are needed for the care of patients such as premature babies, people on dialysis and frail individuals who rely on IV feeding.

Hospitals across the United States are already postponing surgeries and rationing IV fluids as shortages take hold, the Times said.

Hannah Hale, 37, lives near Dallas and for eight years has required IV feeding with a concentrated dextrose solution, after Crohn's disease led to surgeries that impaired her digestive tract.

Her specialized pharmacy told her on Monday it cannot find enough of the IV solution to replenish her supply.

"They're not supposed to just drop me like that," she told the Times, adding that calls to 14 other pharmacies failed to find a new supplier.

"I don't have any recourse," Hale said.

Suppliers Baxter and B. Braun have said they are doing all they can to redirect new sources from elsewhere.

Anticipating Milton, B. Braun told the Times that on Tuesday it had loaded trucks headed north full of products, to get them to a safer location.

At Baxter, staff have been working overtime to help patch together new supply chains, increasing production at plants located overseas.

On Wednesday, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said that it was authorizing imports of IV products from Baxter plants in Canada, Ireland, the United Kingdom and China.

Baxter had been forced to limit supplies to hospitals to 40% of usual following the damage to its plant by Helene, but the company told the Times that deliveries would have already risen to about 60% of usual by Wednesday of this week.

Baxter would not say when it expected its Marion plant to become fully operational again, but said it hoped to resume production in phases by the end of the year.

A bridge near the plant is being prioritized for repair so that trucks already loaded with Baxter product can leave and distribute supplies not damaged by the storm, the Times said.

"We will spare no resource -- human or financial -- to restart operations and help ensure patients and providers have the products they need," José Almeida, the chief executive at Baxter, said in a statement Wednesday.

Hospitals across the nation need IV fluids to hydrate and feed patients, including those battling a life-threatening blood infection known as sepsis.

"When you're coming in with sepsis, and specifically the septic shock, those one-liter bags are the most immediate form of treatments, and sometimes you're getting two, if not three, of them in rapid succession," Dr. Chris DeRienzo, chief physician executive of the American Hospital Association, explained to the Times. "There are so many special populations impacted by the shortage, what it really leads to is an impact on the whole population."

IV fluids made by Baxter and B. Braun are also essential to the care of people in dialysis, because patients need specially formulated liquids to help clean their blood once kidneys begin to fail.

The Marion plant was a major supplier of such fluids, William Poirier of the Renal Healthcare Association told the Times.

Responding to the crisis, Xavier Becerra, secretary of the Health and Human Services Department, said in a letter to health care providers posted Wednesday that his agency was doing all it can. HHS was working with Baxter closely to help minimize disruptions in supply, he said.

"My department commits to mitigating the impact of Hurricane Helene and doing all we can to prevent further disruption as a result of Hurricane Milton," the letter from Becerra said.

The crisis caused by Helene and Milton highlights ongoing concerns about the fragility of the supply chain of essential medical supplies in the United States. Experts have long noted that the manufacture and distribution of certain items is concentrated in only a few companies.

The COVID pandemic revealed many vulnerabilities, as officials scrambled to find essential supplies of masks, gloves and ventilators. In 2023, tornado damage to a Pfizer plant in North Carolina sparked a frenzied search for new supplies of certain generic drugs.

Most of the products involved in these shortages are low-cost, low-profit items with few incentives for new manufacturers to enter into production, experts explained.

Whether government is doing enough to build capacity is uncertain, Tom Cotter, executive director of Healthcare Ready, a nonprofit founded after Hurricane Katrina, told the Times.

"We haven't seen a really big uptick in investment in resiliency from the government to harden our supply chains," Cotter said. "Storms are reaching areas where they've never been before with greater severity. There is an increased need to widen the scope of what we think is vulnerable in our medical supply chain."

More information

Find out more about IV fluids and what they are used for at the Cleveland Clinic.

SOURCES: Statements, Baxter International, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration; The New York Times

What This Means For You

With one manufacturing plant in North Carolina knocked out by Hurricane Helene, and another Florida plant threatened by Milton, the nation's supply of crucial IV fluids is dwindling.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'U.S. Scrambles to Find Hospital IV Fluids After Helene Damages NC Plant', *Courier-Times, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C20C2014527808



'It looked like a tsunami hit'

October 10, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Kelly Snow kellysnow@roxboro-courier.com| Section: News | 919 Words OpenURL Link

Person County helps in recovery efforts following Helene

A grandmother of two approached a truck with supplies donated from Person County residents at a United Way center in Asheville.

Asheville, the unofficial capital of western North Carolina, was one of many mountain communities in that part of the state reeling from the wrath of Hurricane Helene.

The woman shared with Person County Sheriff Jason Wilborn how her two grandkids, aged four and six, were at what was left of their home, and they hadn't eaten in two days.

Like many of Helene's victims, she was desperate, scared and heartbroken.

She asked the sheriff how much money it would cost her for some supplies.

"I said it's free and they're supplies coming in for them," Wilborn told The Courier-Times as he fought back tears. "I told her who I was and I was helping the Buncombe County Sheriff and she starts crying. I told her to back her truck up and we're going to fill it up. It was then that we knew that we were in the heart of it. We loaded her up and she was very thankful."

The Person County Sheriff's Office was one of several local groups that have been involved in the recovery efforts since Hurricane Helene's path of devastation walloped the western part of North Carolina.

According to county manager Katherine Cathey, employees from the sheriff's office, Person County Emergency Service, the Person County Health Department, GIS and IT, as well as two medic crew units have assisted areas affected by the hurricane. Timberlake Fire Department, Person County Rescue Squad and several other groups and individuals in the community have also assisted out west.

The Person County Board of Commissioners approved an update to the statewide mutual aid agreement in the consent agenda during Monday's meeting.

"As an organization, we're pitching in and I appreciate everyone's time and effort in being able to help," Cathey said.

Commissioner Jason Thomas said during Monday's meeting that he had been a part of a group that went to mountains with supplies on Sunday. He said that three tractor-trailer loads of supplies went to Old Fort, Chimney Rock and Madison.

Thomas said that as of last Friday, nine tractor-trailer loads of donated supplies from Person County residents have made their way to western North Carolina.

"There have been so many groups that have stepped up to the plate," Thomas said. "When you work the trailers and see so many people in the county giving their hearts and they're telling you that they feel so bad seeing the devastation and all they want to do is help. That's what we're trying to do – help."

Supplies started reaching the mountain the Monday following the hurricane.

Wilborn said that arrangements for a semi and a tractor trailer began early Saturday and by the end of the night, it was almost full.

By the time Monday came, there were two full tractor trailers, and a few trucks filled with supplies heading west.

"The people in the county came out," Wilborn said. "You couldn't ask for a better response and we're still getting it."

In the first trip to the mountain last week, the sheriff's office dropped off supplies in Burke County and later went to Asheville. While in Asheville, Wilborn and others made contact with people who have loved ones in Person County and assisted other law enforcement agencies and first responders.

Wilborn saw in person the images of destruction that have been seen all over social media and news channels.

"You can't describe the devastation you see," Wilborn said. "You can watch videos and you can see pictures, but there's nothing you can do to describe it unless you see it firsthand. People lost everything. I talked to several locals who were in their vehicles and it was all they had left. Their houses were gone and they were just thankful to be alive. They said that they had never seen anything like it. I was looking at a neighborhood with eight houses in the development right off the edge of the river and only two houses still standing."

Wilborn shared stories about seeing mounds of mud and debris that were 30 feet high on a partially washed-out bridge and broken and mangled railroad tracks that once provided a lifeline to these picturesque communities.

"It looked like a tsunami hit in those valleys and took everything in its path," Wilborn said. "I told people around here, we're used to seeing a few inches of snow and seeing parking lots with mounds of snow, but here, it was mounds and mounds of mud. You're walking down the main thoroughfare in these towns and you're walking on 2-3 inches of dried mud and wet mud in the middle of the road. You'd see the interiors of houses. Washers and dryers, commodes, flooring, whatever you could think would be inside of a home completely tangled and vehicles mixed in. It's going to take months and years for some of those little villages to recover."

The sheriff said that despite the devastation, the goodness of people was shining through.

"It's gut-wrenching to see what you see, but the shining light in all of this is that you see everyone coming together," Wilborn said. "It didn't matter what walk of life of if you were white or Black or American Indian or Hispanic, I spoke to so many people and everybody cried, everybody hugged, everybody laughed, everybody prayed. It was people coming together. There weren't politics involved, wealth versus poor, it was people being people. And I guess that's the light you can see through so much devastation."

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Kelly Snow kellysnow@roxboro-courier.com, "It looked like a tsunami hit", *Courier-Times, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C20C21163F6388>



Voter registration deadline Friday, early voting uninterrupted

October 10, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Elyse Apel | The Center Square | Section: State | 490 Words OpenURL Link

(The Center Square) – As North Carolina recovers from the devastation from Hurricane Helene, the State Board of Elections said in a press conference on Thursday afternoon that all counties are on track to have early voting locations open.

This also comes as the voter registration deadline for mail-in ballots and Election Day voting looms on Friday at 11:59 p.m. Voters who would like to vote in person during the early voting period, which begins Oct. 17 and ends Nov. 2, will still have the opportunity to same-day register.

"The State Board of Elections, the county boards of elections and our many partners are doing everything possible to ensure you can vote in this important election," said Karen Brinson Bell, executive director of the board. "We made certain North Carolinians could vote during the COVID pandemic in 2020 and during past hurricanes and tropical storms. We will do it again in 2024, with as much tenacity and determination as ever for all North Carolinians."

Safety and security of election results continues to be a priority for the board, which says the "chain of custody process" will be preserved.

While the devastation was widespread in western North Carolina with 88 reported dead, possibly over 100 still missing, and millions in property damage, the North Carolina General Assembly and the board have passed numerous resolutions to ensure voting continues smoothly.

Bell said that, before the hurricane, the 25 counties most affected by the storm had planned to open 80 early voting sites. On Oct. 17, which is next Thursday, 75 will open.

"It is absolutely outstanding that our county boards of elections have pulled this off in western North Carolina, given the devastation and destruction left by Helene," Bell said.

The board plans to continue to work with counties to ensure that each of those locations are provided by FEMA and other emergency services the necessary supplies to run effectively.

"We are working with our partners ... to help procure portable restrooms, generators and internet access at a handful of early voting sites to make sure that voting is possible in all 100 counties," Bell said.

There are also 540 Election Day polling places in the 25 counties that the board and counties are in the "final stages" of assessing for damage.

Bell said the board encourages voters who voted by mail track their ballot through a service offered at NCSBE.gov, to ensure that it arrives and is properly counted. Voters should also visit this website for the latest information on voting locations.

There are no plans to move the voter registration deadline, or other deadlines, according to Bell.

"We felt like the other provisions gave them multiple options of being able to return their ballot to other locations," Bell said. "We also knew that the Postal Service was up and running effectively ... which meant that we were in a pretty good position for voters to be able to return their ballots timely, as defined by law, 7:30 p.m. on Election Day."

• Citation (aglc Style)

Elyse Apel | The Center Square, 'Voter registration deadline Friday, early voting uninterrupted', *Courier-Times, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C2479846549EE8



Hurricane Milton tornadoes kill four in Florida amid rescue efforts

October 10, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Gerard Martinez with Daniel Stublen in Orlando| Section: National | 590 Words OpenURL Link

Hurricane Milton tore a coast-to-coast path of destruction across the US state of Florida, whipping up a spate of deadly tornadoes that left at least four people dead and millions without power Thursday.

Milton made landfall Wednesday night on the Florida Gulf Coast as a major Category 3 storm.

Sustained hurricane-force winds smashed inland through communities still reeling from Hurricane Helene two weeks ago, before roaring off Florida's east coast into the Atlantic.

"The wind was the scariest thing because the building sways and the windows rattle, even though they're stormproof windows," said Sarasota resident Carrie Elizabeth, as she emerged to inspect the aftermath early Thursday.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis said the storm triggered deadly tornadoes and left more than three million people were without power.

In a statement on its website, St. Lucie County on the east coast confirmed "four fatalities as a result of these tornadoes."

Wind uprooted large trees and ripped apart the roof at the Tampa Bay Rays' Tropicana Field baseball stadium in St. Petersburg, and sent a construction crane falling onto a downtown building nearby.

In Clearwater on the west coast, emergency crews in rescue boats were out at first light, plucking stranded residents trapped in their homes by more than meter of floodwater water.

As the eye of the storm exited the peninsula, communities were still contending with strong winds, heavy rainfall, and the risk of flash floods.

Amid fear of tornadoes, St. Lucie County sheriff Keith Pearson posted a video on his department's Facebook page warning residents to seek shelter. It showed a garage for police cars that had been destroyed.

"The difficulty with the tornadoes is that we don't know where they're going to land," St. Lucie County commissioner Chris Dzadovsky told reporters.

- Biden fury at Trump -

President Joe Biden was briefed on the "initial impacts" of Milton, the White House said.

The series of hurricanes has quickly become an election campaign issue as Republican candidate Donald Trump spreads conspiracy theories claiming Biden and Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris are abandoning victims.

That prompted a furious response from Biden who on Wednesday called Trump "reckless, irresponsible."

By Thursday morning, Milton weakened to a Category 1 storm but was still registering powerful winds of up to 85 mph (140 kph), according to the National Hurricane Center.

Scientists say extreme rainfall and destructive storms are occurring with greater severity and frequency as

temperatures rise due to climate change. As warmer ocean surfaces release more water vapor, they provide more energy for storms as they form.

- 'Nerve wracking' -

Milton struck just two weeks after another major hurricane, Helene, devastated Florida and other southeastern states, with emergency crews still working to provide relief.

Killing at least 235 people, Helene was the second-deadliest hurricane to hit the continental United States in more than half a century after Katrina, which ravaged the state of Louisiana in 2005, claiming nearly 1,400 lives.

Despite mass evacuations, pool business owner Randy Prior said he planned to ride out Milton at home, as he was still recovering from Helene.

"I am nervous. This is something we just went through with the other storm -- ground saturated, still recovering from that," Prior, 36, told AFP.

In Sarasota, Elizabeth expressed the feelings of many that despite the violent night, Hurricane Milton was not quite as bad as had been feared.

"I felt like our building was very secure. So it turned out to be fine, but it was very nerve wracking," she said.

"I feel that we're very lucky," she said. "It'll take a long time to clean up, but it could have been much worse. So I feel like we're lucky."

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Gerard Martinez with Daniel Stublen in Orlando, 'Hurricane Milton tornadoes kill four in Florida amid rescue efforts', *Courier-Times, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C20C2020E90898>



Monster Hurricane Milton makes landfall, walloping coast of Florida

October 10, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Gerard Martinez with Daniel Stublen in Orlando| Section: National | 629 Words OpenURL Link

Hurricane Milton left a trail of destruction as it crashed into the Florida coast Wednesday, its furious winds sparking tornadoes and flash floods across a US state reeling from another massive storm two weeks earlier.

Nearly three million Florida homes and businesses were without power after the weather front made landfall as a Category 3 storm near Siesta Key on the US state's western coast.

Milton triggered tornadoes before its arrival, with unconfirmed reports of multiple fatalities after one twister struck a retirement community on Florida's east coast.

President Joe Biden was briefed on the "initial impacts" of Milton, the White House said, as responses from Democrats and Republicans are likely to be closely scrutinized with just four weeks until the tightly contested US presidential election.

Milton weakened to a Category 1 storm but was still registering powerful winds of up to 90 miles (150 kilometers) per hour on Thursday morning, according to the National Hurricane Center.

"Very heavy rains and damaging winds continue across much of central Florida. Flash flood emergencies remain in effect," the NHC warned.

Tidal surges were expected to inundate western Florida's heavily populated and low-lying Gulf Coast.

At least 2.8 million households and businesses had lost power in the state by late Wednesday, according to tracker poweroutage.us.

Milton is expected to tear inland, with tourist hub Orlando -- home to Disney World, which has closed for the storm -- in its path.

Scientists say extreme rainfall and destructive storms are occurring with greater severity and frequency as temperatures rise due to climate change. As warmer ocean surfaces release more water vapor, they provide more energy for storms as they form.

In cities up and down Florida's western coast, the wind howled furiously and torrential rain fell as people took shelter wherever they could.

In the city of Sarasota, near Siesta Key, gusts of wind blew panes of glass from buildings on the waterfront.

The streets were deserted and trees swayed almost horizontal, barely able to withstand the wind. Businesses were shuttered and sandbagged.

On a wooden board fixed against a window of an old red brick building, someone wrote: "Be kind Milton."

The airports in Tampa and Sarasota were closed until further notice.

Just before landfall, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis urged state residents who had not evacuated to "stay inside and stay off the roads," adding: "Flood waters and rushing storm surge are very dangerous."

- 'The other storm' -

Milton struck just two weeks after another major hurricane, Helene, devastated Florida and other southeastern states, with emergency crews still working to provide relief.

With at least 235 people killed, Helene was the second-deadliest hurricane to hit the continental United States in more than half a century after Katrina, which ravaged the state of Louisiana in 2005, claiming nearly 1,400 lives.

Randy Prior, who owns a pool business, says he planned to ride out Milton at home after recently toughing out Hurricane Helene, which flooded Florida before wreaking havoc across remote areas further inland such as western North Carolina

"I am nervous. This is something we just went through with the other storm -- ground saturated, still recovering from that," Prior, 36, told AFP.

US presidential candidate Donald Trump has sought political advantage by falsely saying storm aid is channeled away from residents, many of whom are supporters of his Republican Party, and toward migrants.

At the White House on Wednesday, President Biden slammed Trump's "onslaught of lies."

"There's been a reckless, irresponsible and relentless promotion of disinformation and outright lies," Biden said in angry remarks.

Vice President Kamala Harris, who is taking on Trump at the polls on November 5, echoed Biden's criticisms in a separate telephone interview with CNN.

"It is dangerous, it is unconscionable, frankly, that anyone who'd consider themselves a leader would mislead desperate people to the point that those desperate people would not receive the aid to which they are entitled," she said.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Gerard Martinez with Daniel Stublen in Orlando, 'Monster Hurricane Milton makes landfall, walloping coast of Florida', *Courier-Times, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1F3F0B9485A38>



'Get a life': Hurricane whips up US election storm

October 10, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Danny KEMP| Section: National | 640 Words OpenURL Link

Hurricane Milton crashed into the US presidential election Thursday as President Joe Biden told Donald Trump to "get a life" and Kamala Harris rebuked her election rival for spreading misinformation.

As Florida reeled from Milton and the recent Hurricane Helene, a political tempest was brewing as Trump and his Republicans unleashed a flood of falsehoods about the White House response to the two storms.

Biden and Harris have launched a feisty fightback as they seek to show they are in control of the situation, and accuse the former president of putting survivors in danger.

The 81-year-old president testily said, "Are you kidding me?" when a reporter asked after a hurricane briefing on Thursday if he had spoken to Trump, the man he beat in the 2020 election, to tell him to stop the misinformation.

Biden then stopped, looked directly into the television camera and said in mock commander-in-chief style: "Mr president Trump, former president Trump -- get a life, man, help these people."

He took another potshot on his way out, saying that "the public will hold him accountable" at the ballot box in November.

Biden dropped out of the 2024 race and handed the baton to his vice president after a disastrous debate against Trump, but is keenly aware the way his administration handles the hurricane response could weigh on her election chances.

- 'Lies' -

Harris also attacked the former president, after he spoke about wind turbines in a campaign speech where he mocked its proponents for thinking it "sounds so wonderful."

"Yesterday, I met with members of the federal team that is working around the clock to deliver relief to Americans affected by Helene and Milton," Harris said on X while on the campaign trail in Nevada.

"Meanwhile, Donald Trump spread lies and educated us about the sound of the wind."

Far from fostering national unity in the face of catastrophe, the double whammy of hurricanes has fueled US political divisions less than four weeks before an agonizingly close and bitterly fought election.

"Hopefully on January 20, you're going to have somebody who's really going to help you," Trump said in a video message on Thursday to the people of Florida, where he lives, in a reference to the date the next president will be sworn into office.

Trump has repeatedly taken aim at Harris and Biden, slamming them for being out of Washington when Helene hit two weeks ago and then falsely claiming the White House had not been in contact with the governors of affected states.

Biden accused Trump of an "onslaught of lies" including that money for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was being diverted to migrants; that flood-hit property is confiscated; and that storm victims are only getting \$750 in total compensation.

US Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said hurricane recovery workers were now receiving threats online.

"We are seeing horrific hate speech," Mayorkas told a White House briefing, adding that it was a "motivating force for people to do harm, and it has got to stop."

- 'So stupid' -

As Milton left a trail of devastation across Florida and at least 10 people dead, the conservative Republican governor and former presidential hopeful Ron DeSantis further stirred things up over claims that he'd refused to take calls from Harris.

"What she's doing is she's trying to inject herself into this because of her political campaign," said DeSantis, adding that he "didn't even know she was trying to reach me."

DeSantis added: "I don't have time for those games. I don't care about her campaign. Obviously I'm not a supporter of hers."

In a brief moment of bipartisanship, Biden said Wednesday as Hurricane Milton drew near that the Florida governor had been "very gracious" when they spoke.

But he also launched into another condemnation of right-wing hurricane misinformation -- especially conspiracy theories spread by pro-Trump Republican Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene that the hurricanes were geoengineered.

"It's so stupid," he said. "It's got to stop."

dk/sst

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Danny KEMP, "Get a life": Hurricane whips up US election storm", *Courier-Times, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C247979119BF20



Milton: Florida picks up pieces from second hurricane in as many weeks

October 10, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Shirleen Guerra | The Center Square | Section: National | 507 Words OpenURL Link

(The Center Square) - At least 12 are dead following Wednesday's overnight strike of Hurricane Milton in Florida, the second time in two weeks the state has took a blow from the Gulf of Mexico.

The storm was down from a Category 5 hurricane to a Category 3, meaning at least maximum sustained winds of 130 mph, when it landed in Sarasota County about 70 miles from Tampa. It rapidly tore across central Florida, producing significant flooding, high winds, and destructive tornadoes.

Gov. Ron DeSantis in a press conference Thursday said rescue teams, National Guard, State Guard, Fish and Wildlife Commission personnel, local law enforcement, and first responders successfully executed rescue missions overnight and accessed damages as morning came. The second-term Republican had been roundly praised by Democratic President Joe Biden for preparedness efforts beforehand.

Helene struck the Big Region as a Category 4 hurricane on Sept. 26. While significant impact happened in Florida and Georgia, its remnants have caused catastrophic damage was mostly in the mountains of North Carolina.

The governor visited St. Lucie County. There, heavy damage by tornados contributed to at least five deaths in that area of the state's Atlantic coast.

Police Chief Tony Holloway said at least two people were killed in St. Petersburg during the storm. Three people died in Volusia County, according to the sheriff.

One man died after reportedly driving around 1:30 a.m. in Citrus County before a tree fell and hit his car.

A curfew was enacted to prevent unnecessary traffic on our roads during dangerous storm conditions for anyone other than regular members of law enforcement bodies, regular employees of businesses, industries, or government entities traveling for their jobs, and all emergency workers.

"Any person who knowingly violates this ordinance shall, upon conviction, be subject to a fine of up to \$500 and/or 60 days jail," the sheriff's office posted on X.

DeSantis said the storm weakened enough before landfall to minimize the worst-case storm surge. He stated that this doesn't mean there is not a lot of damage or a lot to contend with, but in terms of what they prepared for, they have an abundance of resources.

Biden said he predeployed thousands of federal personnel in the areas affected by the storm, including more than 1,000 Coast Guard members.

DeSantis said damage to the ports was minimal on the East Coast, but the bottom line is that fuel is needed throughout the state to get things going. With 1.5 million gallons of diesel and 1.1 million gallons of regular unleaded gasoline already in the state, he reiterated that it comes down to distribution.

His hope is stores will reopen soon.

Since Milton started, around 4 million people have been without power across the state. More than 50,000 prestaged linemen waiting for the calls helped restore power to more than 700,000 people by late afternoon.

DeSantis said he brought linemen in from as far as California.

Desantis declared a state of emergency and gathered trucks from every agency to clear debris left over from Helene as Milton started to form and winds picked up. The goal was to minimize damage.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Shirleen Guerra | The Center Square, 'Milton: Florida picks up pieces from second hurricane in as many weeks', *Courier-Times, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C24796F6B441D8>



Commissioner files assault charge on opponent

October 10, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Kelly Snow kellysnow@roxboro-courier.com| Section: News | 450 Words OpenURL Link

A Person County commissioner alleges a political challenger assaulted him by bumping his shoulder at a precinct during primary election day.

Person County commissioner candidate Tracy Ellixson was charged last Monday with misdemeanor simple assault stemming from an incident that took place March 5 at the old Helena Elementary School. Person County commissioner Derrick Sims is listed as the complainant on the criminal summons.

According to the criminal summons, "[Ellixson] unlawfully and willfully did assault and strike Charles Derrick Sims by hitting [Sims'] shoulder area with [Ellixson's] shoulder."

Ellixson is scheduled to make his first appearance on the charge in Person County District Court on Oct. 21 – four days after early voting begins in North Carolina and two weeks before the Nov. 5 election day.

In a conversation with The Courier-Times Tuesday morning, Ellixson declined to comment on the lawsuit per the advice of his attorney.

Ellixson issued a statement to The Courier-Times later in the morning as he was traveling to Florida ahead of Hurricane Milton to assist with power restoration efforts as a lineman. Ellixson was in western North Carolina last week with crews in a similar capacity following Hurricane Helene.

"I'm currently dedicating my time to storm recovery efforts out of town, but upon my return, I would appreciate the opportunity to sit down and address any questions you may have about me, my campaign and my vision for Person County. For now, my heart is with those affected by Hurricane Helene, and I'm committed to supporting the recovery process," Ellixson wrote in the statement.

Sims also declined to comment.

Sims and Ellixson, both Republicans vying for one of three county commissioner seats, were among a group of candidates in a variety of races who were campaigning at the old Helena Elementary School, the Flat River precinct, on primary day in early March.

The disagreement that took place March 5 appears to stem from the location of where Sims, Ellixson and fellow Republican candidate for county commissioner Sherry Wilborn set up signs at the precinct. Wilborn was the highest vote getter in the Republican primary for county commissioner.

The Flat River precinct includes Timberlake and has the largest number of voters in the county. Both Ellixson and Sims, as well as Wilborn, advanced through the primary to the general election.

Ellixson, seeking his first political office, finished second in the Republican primary, garnering 2,186 votes, followed by Sims with 1,811 votes – defeating John Byrd, Sr. by 26 votes.

Sims is seeking his second full term as a commissioner. He was appointed to the board in February 2020 following the resignation of David Newell and then won his own four-year term in the 2020 election. Sims finished third in the race for one of three available seats.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Kelly Snow kellysnow@roxboro-courier.com, 'Commissioner files assault charge on opponent', *Courier-Times, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C20C210D4556C0



Hurricane Milton makes landfall in Florida

October 10, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Shirleen Guerra | The Center Square | Section: National | 492 Words OpenURL Link

(The Center Square) – Hurricane Milton hit Florida's west coast Wednesday night near Siesta Key as a Category 3 storm just weeks after Hurricane Helene took landfall in the Big Bend.

By 1 a.m., the storm had weakened to a Category 1.

Milton landed about 70 miles outside of Tampa Bay. High winds, flooding, rain and storm surge continue to pummel the state Thursday morning, causing destruction and leaving more than 3.2 million people without electricity across the state of Florida, according to poweroutage.us.

Mandatory evacuation orders went out ahead of the storm to areas just south of Tampa Bay as Gov. Ron DeSantis issued an executive order declaring a state of emergency for 51 counties.

"If you choose to stay in one of those evacuation areas, you're going to die," said Tampa Mayor Jane Castor, warning residents ahead of Hurricane Milton's landfall.

Those stuck in the path took to social media, saying, "Evacuation is a privilege," due to gas, hotel, and airline prices skyrocketing ahead of the mandate.

DeSantis said there is stocked fuel in the state, but it's not a supply issue; it's a distribution issue.

The governor said ahead of the storm that a wide range of shelter options are available as an alternative to driving hundreds of miles.

Many turned around after being stranded on the highway. Gas stations ran out of gas in several areas, and many residents decided to turn around and shelter in place.

DeSantis said 8,000 Florida National Guard, 40,000 utility linemen, all Urban Search and Rescue, as well as all Florida State Guard and Fish and Wildlife were prepared and ready ahead of the storm's hit.

Multiple tornadoes made their way across Florida before Milton's initial contact.

Tropicana Field, the Tampa Bay Rays' stadium, had the roof ripped off due to winds where evacuees and emergency workers were to take shelter.

The city of St. Petersburg shut off drinking water at midnight, due to a water main break citywide.

Emergency services in many areas stopped responding to service calls shortly before 9 p.m., leaving those needing medical attention or rescue until after Milton passed.

Milton centered off from the state's Atlantic coastline about 10 miles northeast of Cape Canaveral, with flash flood warnings for heavy rainfall in effect for parts of central Florida.

With bands of heavy rain containing strong wind gusts up to 92 mph in Marineland and 87 mph in Daytona Beach, the storm continued to pummel parts of the state, especially eastern areas.

These conditions are expected to improve during Thursday's second half as Milton heads farther into the Atlantic

and the rainfall and strong wind gusts ease up across the state.

Certain parts of Florida's east coast, as well as coastal areas in Georgia and South Carolina, are expected to see part of Milton's storm surge as it passes.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported that Hurricane Ian, which hit in 2022, was the costliest hurricane in Florida history and the third-costliest ever in the U.S., causing damage to Georgia, Virginia, the Carolinas, and Cuba.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Shirleen Guerra | The Center Square, 'Hurricane Milton makes landfall in Florida', *Courier-Times, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C20C2026AD0FE0



NCHSAA Board announces fall sports season modifications

October 10, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Sports | 338 Words OpenURL Link

CHAPEL HILL – The North Carolina High School Athletic Association's Board of Directors met to discuss options for concluding the Fall Sports Season including the postseason calendar. These discussions were necessitated by the devastation caused by Hurricane Helene in western North Carolina.

"Changes to the fall calendar are difficult as well as complex but necessary," said NCHSAA President Dr. Stephen Gainey and NCHSAA Commissioner Que Tucker in a joint statement. "Keeping our student-athletes safe as we try to minimize risk of injury was central to any decisions made. We commend the work of the NCHSAA staff in its research, the Board of Directors in making time to consider these changes and the willingness of our host partners to accommodate any changes and make their venues available."

The Board approved changes and modifications to the schedule. Sunday practices and competitions are still prohibited. The calendar below encompasses the changes made by the Board. Playoff dates in bold reflect a change.

The volleyball reporting deadline has been moved from Oct. 16 until Oct. 19 at 11:59 p.m. Seeding will take place Oct. 20 after 1 p.m. with the opening round set for Oct. 22. The playoffs will take place the next two weeks with the regional finals slated for Oct. 31 and state championships Nov. 2.

The cross country reporting deadline has been changed from Oct. 19 to Oct. 22.

The individual women's tennis reporting deadling has been pushed to Oct. 14 to allow for an extra day of competition. Regionals are set for Oct. 18-19 with state championships the following week. The dual team tennis playoffs reporting deadline has been pushed back a week to Oct. 17 with seeding set for the following day. The playoffs will begin Oct. 21 and culminate with regionals on Nov. 5 and state championships Nov. 9

The football state playoffs have been pushed back a week. The reporting deadline has been moved to Nov. 9 with seeding set for the next day. The first round begins Nov. 15 with the playoffs concluding with the state championships Dec. 20-21.

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At least 11 dead in Florida but Hurricane Milton not as bad as feared

October 10, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Daniel STUBLEN | Section: National | 748 Words OpenURL Link

At least 11 people died as Hurricane Milton sent tornadoes spinning across Florida, officials said Thursday as the state grappled with flooding, power outages and other woes from a milder than expected storm that many had feared would be catastrophic.

The hurricane blasted across the state late Wednesday before roaring into the Atlantic, leaving behind roads blocked by downed trees and power lines. It shredded the roof of a baseball stadium. Some three million homes and businesses were without power.

So far, though, it appeared that tornadoes, rather than floodwaters, have been responsible for the storm's deaths.

"It was pretty scary," said Susan Stepp, a 70-year-old resident of Fort Pierce, a city on Florida's east coast where four people in a senior living community died after a tornado spawned by Milton struck Wednesday.

"They did find some people just outside dead, in a tree," she told AFP. "I wish they would have evacuated."

The deaths are five in St. Lucie County, three in Volusia County two in the city of St. Petersburg and one in the city of Tampa, local authorities said. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas told reporters the deaths were caused by the tornadoes.

In Tampa, police found a woman in her early 70s trapped under a large tree branch and pronounced her deceased, saying her death "is believed to be related to restoration efforts post Hurricane Milton."

In Polk County, a member of a road crew was struck and killed by a colleague's vehicle as he removed a downed tree.

Stepp's husband Bill said a tornado "picked up my 22-ton motor home and threw it across the yard."

"Scary and heartbreaking at the same time, to see much damage and all things you really love just gone, but it's only things and we're still here," the 72-year-old said.

The southeastern US state was able to avoid the level of catastrophic devastation that officials had feared.

"The storm was significant, but thankfully this was not the worst-case scenario," Florida Governor Ron DeSantis told a news conference.

Milton made landfall on the Florida Gulf Coast as a major Category 3 storm, with powerful winds smashing communities still reeling from Hurricane Helene which hit only two weeks ago, killing 237 people in Florida and other southeast states.

The National Weather Service issued 126 tornado warnings across the state Wednesday, the most ever issued for a single calendar day for the state in records dating back to 1986, wrote hurricane expert Michael Lowry.

In Sarasota Bay, Kristin Joyce, a 72-year-old interior designer who did not evacuate either, took photos of tree branches snapped by the wind.

"There is no question it needs to be a serious wake-up call for everyone in terms of climate change," she told AFP,

surveying the damage.

Scientists say extreme rainfall and destructive storms are occurring with greater severity and frequency as temperatures rise due to climate change. As warmer ocean surfaces release more water vapor, they provide more energy for storms as they form.

- Biden fury at Trump -

President Joe Biden, who said he spoke with DeSantis Thursday, urged people to stay inside in the aftermath of the storm, with downed power lines and debris creating dangerous conditions.

In a video posted on social media, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump said he and his wife Melania were praying for Florida residents affected by the storm and urged them to vote for him.

"Hopefully, on January 20th you're going to have somebody that's really going to help you and help you like never before," the former president said, referring to the presidential inauguration date.

Hurricane Helene struck Florida late last month, and the back-to-back storms have become election fodder as Trump spreads conspiracy theories claiming Biden and Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris are abandoning victims.

That prompted a furious response from Biden who on Wednesday called Trump "reckless, irresponsible."

- 'Lucky' -

In Cocoa Beach, on Florida's east coast, one tornado swept in from the ocean, blowing out almost all the windows of a hair salon and tearing a chunk of roof off a bank.

Katherine and Larry Hingle said they were on their porch, watching water from a nearby river rise, when the tornado came through Wednesday evening.

"I said 'it sounds like a train's coming,'" Katherine, 53, told AFP while out to walk their dog and survey the damage.

In Sarasota, resident Carrie Elizabeth expressed the feelings of many -- that despite the violent night, Milton was not quite as bad as had been feared.

"I feel that we're very lucky," she said. "It'll take a long time to clean up, but it could have been much worse."

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Daniel STUBLEN, 'At least 11 dead in Florida but Hurricane Milton not as bad as feared', *Courier-Times, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C2479787040158>



Battles of Helene recovery include misinformation

October 10, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Alan Wooten | The Center Square | Section: State | 801 Words OpenURL Link

(The Center Square) – False claims by a Biden administration official on the way to North Carolina sparked one controversy.

Plenty more are rumbling from the hills and hollows of the Blue Ridge and Appalachians. Members of Congress from the region are trying to learn facts in addition to sharing knowledge, their plight as steep as Mount Mitchell in the cacophony of claims.

Alejandro Mayorkas, embattled secretary of Homeland Security, told White House press corps on a plane to North Carolina last week "FEMA does not have the funds to make it through the season and what – what is imminent."

His comment from the transcript was paired with an April release from FEMA on \$640 million for migrants and ignited across the political spectrum less than five weeks before a presidential Election Day.

The context was lost, however. Hurricane recovery comes from a Disaster Relief Fund – a different pot of money for the Federal Emergency Management Agency. And lost on Mayorkas was the reality of congressional action a full week earlier.

Asked Thursday on Fox News Radio if Congress should reconvene to appropriate more money, Foxx said, "Actually, no, that's not necessary because we passed the continuing resolution and we fully funded the government as of Oct. 1st. The speaker has pointed this out before. When they say they don't have money, their budgets are complete.

"They have all the money they need. We funded the federal government in September before we left. And so, there is no need for Congress to go back and give supplemental funding."

She said Congress would be back to do supplementals on issues.

"But the agencies need to stop saying they don't have the money because they have their full budgets," Foxx said.

And accusations without merit need to cease, too, she said. Foxx was asked specifically about FEMA not "even around or visible." And "Elon Musk saying that his folks were being blocked from delivering Starlinks by the FAA," host Jessica Rosenthal asked.

"I have heard the same kind of reports," Foxx said, "and what I've asked people for is give me a name and then a location. Where did this happen specifically? And then people say, well, I heard it from somebody else who heard it from somebody else.

"Well, until we can get a specific name and a specific location of a person who has taken some action, we can't really track that down."

U.S. Rep. Chuck Edwards, R-N.C., represents the 11th district, south of Foxx, but still in the mountains. He's put out daily updates with vital recovery information, inclusive of infrastructure woes and successes, and mainly routes to assistance for his constituents. He added another release on Tuesday, debunking myths.

"We have seen a level of support that is unmatched by most any other disaster nationwide; but amidst all of the support, we have also seen an uptick in untrustworthy sources trying to spark chaos by sharing hoaxes, conspiracy

theories, and hearsay about hurricane response efforts across our mountains," Edwards wrote.

Rutherford County Emergency Management is another that, on Saturday, broke from updates on assistance avenues to issue a release in hopes of stopping a story that the town of Chimney Rock would be taken by the federal government and bulldozed.

It also refuted claims that the federal government had paid "only" \$750 to survivors and that the Federal Aviation Authority had restricted airspace, thwarting humanitarian aid from arriving.

Foxx, Edwards and many others have affirmed needs are great. And they won't stop anytime soon.

"We need a lot of things," Foxx said. "We need our military who can come in and help build temporary bridges and temporary roads so we can get to people. The volunteers can only do so much in that regard.

"So we need the military and the National Guard to be able to do that. The Highway Department, I understand, and I see the trucks have hired as many local contractors as they can to help clear the roads so that people can get through. Even our main roads are stopped in some cases because there's washouts on major roads and they have to stop while they're working on the road trying to stabilize it."

She is hopeful bureaucratic red tape is kept at bay.

"We often have problems with the federal government, in particular, the state government, sometime," she said. "We need people not to hold over their heads these unnecessary rules and regulations. Obviously, we don't want slipshod work done, but too often, you run into issues where you've got to get permits on top of permits, when things could be done quickly."

San Francisco's earthquake in October 1989 came to mind.

"They estimated that it would take 15 years to rebuild the roads," Foxx said. "They put aside every rule and regulation and rebuilt the roads in like a year and a half. That's the kind of thing that we need."

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Alan Wooten | The Center Square, 'Battles of Helene recovery include misinformation', *Courier-Times, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C2479855B63E28