

**Testimony of
Long Beach Township, NJ
Mayor Joseph Mancini
presented to the
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security
for the hearing on
Rebuilding after Hurricane Sandy**

March 1, 2013

I would like to thank Chairwoman Mary Landrieu and Senator Frank Lautenberg for holding this hearing and for your leadership in helping to secure the funding needed for us to clean up from the worst natural disaster New Jersey has ever seen and to start the process of rebuilding. I would also like to thank the Chairwoman for taking the time to come to Long Beach Island to see firsthand the devastation to our homes and businesses. Your experience with rebuilding after a major storm and your guidance on the best practices for communities like mine is invaluable. Senator Lautenberg, you have always been a champion for our state and I knew that with you in Washington fighting for the funding we so desperately needed we would certainly win in the end. Thank you for all you have done for the state and will continue to do as you finish your term.

Long Beach Township has a total of 8,000 homes of which 3,000 homes were breached by water and another 1,000 homes suffered gas leaks. We had homes knocked off their foundations. Cars, boats, refrigerators and other personal property were swept into other homes and into the streets. With all that, we were approximately 3 feet to 4 feet deep in sand. We had no water, power or sewer for 2 months in certain areas. With help from the New Jersey State Police, the Louisiana State Police, the National Guard and our own law enforcement we were able to maintain search and rescue, security and patrol operations while we rebuilt our dunes and beaches to ward off the next Nor'easter which followed just days after Hurricane Sandy. Due to this cooperative operation, we were able to allow residents to get back onto the Island for a brief time to grab necessary salvageable items and do a quick assessment of the damage a little over a week after the storm. What many residents found was catastrophic with personal effects completely washed away or damaged beyond repair by the water and sand. Sadly, this story was repeated up and down the New Jersey coast with many people still displaced, unable to return to their homes.

There is a solution to minimize the magnitude of the destruction in any future storm and that is the Army Corps engineered dune project. On Long Beach Island, the 18 mile stretch of land that includes my Township, the sand dunes and beaches became our levees and the damage was significantly less in the parts of the island that had beaches widened and dunes constructed as part of the ongoing Army Corps of Engineers storm protection project. This Corps project was authorized in 2000 and was determined to be technically feasible, economically justified and environmentally acceptable and with the help of Senator Lautenberg and his colleagues, we have been able to secure funding to complete 4.4 miles of the Island including the towns of Harvey Cedars, Surf City and a portion of Brant Beach. Those towns received very minimal damage to

their homes, businesses and infrastructure proving that the Corps storm protection project worked. It's clear that the funding was well spent because the high level of protection from the unprecedented storm surge saved millions of dollars in property and infrastructure reconstruction. We know that these efforts are successful so now, 13 years after being authorized, it is time to finally complete the remaining 13.5 miles of the project to ensure the long-term sustainability of the shore area. I look forward to working with Senator Lautenberg and the entire New Jersey Congressional delegation to provide that protection to our community. In the meantime, residents are beginning to rebuild. I would like to thank FEMA for their work in ensuring the public is appropriately informed of all deadlines and for providing informative presentations for the residents and local governments. In addition, we appreciate that FEMA has worked closely with the Township's emergency management providing quick answers when asked about making purchases to move forward during the storm and keeping us informed on what expenses can be reimbursed. That being said, we do have concerns with the flood maps recently released by FEMA. We all want to work together on common sense solutions to make sure the maps provide for adequate levels of protection. However, our concern is not about the additional heights added to the Base Flood Elevation (BFE) but to newly designated bayside Velocity zones (V zones). None of the homes on the Island that were built according to the 1984 BFE's were flooded and the additional heights have been accepted. The newly established V zones put 16,000 homes in a 20 mile diameter in a new V zone. 8,000 of these homes are built on slabs and cannot be raised. According to FEMA and its engineers, this was based on the assumption of a 3 foot wave that would potentially travel through 2 miles of homes and break apart the existing homes. According to FEMA, this data was obtained by doing a flyover at 10,000 feet which I don't believe can provide an accurate picture for common sense map adjustments. In addition, FEMA's calculations did not take into account the new engineered dune project which would mitigate any wave action. FEMA informed us that this was not taken into account because it did not exist last summer when the flood maps were prepared. This miscalculation of adding a V zone to an area that does not have wave action is placing an incredible and unnecessary burden on the residents. I hope to continue to work with FEMA, the State and this Subcommittee to find an effective alternative that does not put undue hardship on homeowners.

There will be challenges as we rebuild but Long Beach Township continues to move forward. All streets are clear and utilities are working at the present time and we will have 95% of our businesses back by Memorial Day.

In some ways it's hard to believe the storm was only four months ago because so many have worked hard to restore the vital infrastructure that allows us to get back to business as usual but in many ways, particularly when dealing with homeowners or businesses who lost everything and are struggling to rebuild their lives, it's like the storm happened yesterday.

I want to thank you again for holding this hearing and for your continued attention to the needs of those impacted by Hurricane Sandy. I look forward to working with the Committee and FEMA to provide the highest level of assistance to the many people who are lucky enough to call the beautiful Jersey shore home.