

THURSDAY, AUGUST 23, 2018

# MCCASKILL PRESSES FEMA ON POTENTIAL OVERUSE OF NONCOMPETITIVE CONTRACTS

**WASHINGTON** – Continuing her longstanding fight to curb wasteful government contracts, U.S. Senator Claire McCaskill, the top-ranking Democrat on the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, today demanded answers from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on its use of noncompetitive contracts in the wake of the destructive 2017 hurricane season. This action follows a Senate hearing in April where McCaskill questioned FEMA Administrator Brock Long about noncompetitive contracts.

“FEMA has to do a better job answering straightforward questions about its contracting process to ensure Missourians’ hard-earned dollars are being used efficiently to help survivors of natural disasters,” said McCaskill, a former Missouri State Auditor.

Though agencies like FEMA can award noncompetitive contracts when there is an “urgent need,” reform measures put in place after Hurricane Katrina limit the length of these contracts to 150 days. A [2015 audit](https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-15-783) (<https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-15-783>) by the Government Accountability Office found that more than half of FEMA’s noncompetitive disaster support contracts that were reviewed exceeded that time limit without the necessary justification or approval. Following Administrator Long’s testimony before the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee earlier this year, McCaskill pressed for details about FEMA’s noncompetitive contracts—however, Administrator Long could not report which of FEMA’s 355

noncompetitive contracts exceeded that 150 day limit. As of August 22, FEMA has obligated more than \$4 billion on contracts in response to the 2017 hurricane season, and noncompetitive contracts made up around \$600 million of that figure.

In a letter to Administrator Long, McCaskill wrote, “Your response indicates that FEMA lacks the capability to track basic information about its noncompetitive contracts... I remain concerned that FEMA is not taking sufficient steps to properly limit the use of noncompetitive contracts.”

This step is the most recent in McCaskill’s long history of contracting oversight, particularly around FEMA’s response during the hurricane season. In April, McCaskill released a [bombshell report](https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/media/minority-media/breaking-mccaskill-releases-report-detailing-systemic-failures-in-fema-contracting-for-emergency-tarps-and-sheeting) (<https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/media/minority-media/breaking-mccaskill-releases-report-detailing-systemic-failures-in-fema-contracting-for-emergency-tarps-and-sheeting>) that revealed significant failures by FEMA in its contracting process for emergency tarps and sheeting during last year’s hurricane season, including insufficient use of prepositioned contracts. Just months later, FEMA [began the solicitation process](https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/media/minority-media/fema-moves-toward-prepositioned-contracts-for-emergency-sheeting-after-continued-mccaskill-oversight) (<https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/media/minority-media/fema-moves-toward-prepositioned-contracts-for-emergency-sheeting-after-continued-mccaskill-oversight>) for prepositioned contractors that can deliver plastic sheeting used for temporary roofing protection that is often needed in the wake of a hurricane. And earlier this month, amid continued calls from McCaskill, FEMA [revealed](https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/media/minority-media/amid-continued-mccaskill-oversight-fema-awards-27-prepositioned-contracts-since-hurricane-harvey) (<https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/media/minority-media/amid-continued-mccaskill-oversight-fema-awards-27-prepositioned-contracts-since-hurricane-harvey>) it had expanded its use of prepositioned contracts more broadly, which help ensure survivors get the assistance they need and can save millions in taxpayer dollars. The Senator also [found](https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/media/minority-media/breaking-fema-puerto-rico-recovery-food-supplier-appears-to-have-plagiarized-proposal-for-156-million-contract) (<https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/media/minority-media/breaking-fema-puerto-rico-recovery-food-supplier-appears-to-have-plagiarized-proposal-for-156-million-contract>) in February that a cancelled \$156 million contract that was supposed to provide 30 million meals to Puerto Rico included misrepresentations, including apparent extensive plagiarism.

Read McCaskill’s letter to FEMA [HERE](https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/download/mccaskill-ltr-to-fema-re-noncompetitive-contracts) (<https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/download/mccaskill-ltr-to-fema-re-noncompetitive-contracts>).

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