

Hurricane Response Proves Volunteerism is Better than Authoritarianism

10/16/2024 • Power & Market • Ron Paul

Following Hurricane Helene, many private helicopter pilots launched their own search and rescue missions. One would think government officials would welcome the help of these volunteers, but instead they harassed them and even threatened to arrest them!

For example, one private helicopter pilot rescued an individual stranded by Helene. Unfortunately, he was threatened with arrest if he flew his helicopter back into the impacted area to save someone left behind on the earlier flight.

In a video shared by comedian and political commentator Jimmy Dore, Jonathan Howard, a member of the Florida State Guard and volunteer for the nonprofit group Aerial Recovery, discussed how the government took credit for the rescue of an 11-day-old baby even though the rescue was done totally by volunteers. Mr. Howard stated that when he goes on a search and rescue mission he sees around forty other private helicopters and just two military helicopters.

One reason the federal government is unable to provide adequate aid to those impacted by Helene (and now Milton) is the government is sending military aid worth billions of dollars to Ukraine and Israel. In fact, over 700 members of the Tennessee National Guard are deploying to the Middle East as people in the state deal with damage from Hurricane Helene!

When questioned on Fox News about Helene's impact, South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham made an impassioned plea for more aid to Israel. Senator Graham is far from the only member of Congress to put the needs of foreign countries and the military-industrial complex ahead of Americans.

Congress will likely consider a multi-billion-dollar disaster relief bill in the post-election "lame duck" session. Conservative Republicans will (properly) demand the spending be offset by cuts in other spending. The problem is most of these "fiscal conservatives" will vote to increase the national debt to fund the military-industrial-complex.

When I served in Congress, I voted against federal disaster aid even when the disaster impacted my district. Inevitably my office would receive complaints from outraged constituents. After a few months of

jumping through the federal government's bureaucratic hoops in seeking to recover from the disaster, many constituents would call my office to say that they now agree that they would be better off if the government would stop trying to "help" the victims of natural disasters.

One of the helicopter pilots who voluntarily flew into the areas impacted by Helene was Curves fitness chain founder Gary Heavin. Mr. Heavin, in addition to being a successful businessman, is a passionate advocate for liberty who serves on the advisory board of my Institute for Peace and Prosperity. It is not surprising that someone who believes in liberty would be willing to help those in need rather than rely on the government to provide assistance.

Contrary to the lies spread by authoritarians, libertarianism does not require selfishness. Libertarians welcome voluntary action to help those in need. Libertarians object to government assistance because it is based on force. Authoritarianism leads to poverty, war, chaos in the streets, and a lack of compassion for the less fortunate. Liberty leads to prosperity, peace, and a flourishing of private charities.

[Originally published by the Ron Paul Institute.](#)