

Camden County Officials Collecting Donations For Puerto Rico

The county has joined an effort to send aid to Puerto Rico in the wake of last week's hurricane.

By [Anthony Bellano \(Patch Staff\)](#) - Updated September 28, 2017 2:43 pm ET

The Camden County Freeholder Board is joining with leaders from throughout the region, including the Puerto Rican Congress of New Jersey, to lend help to Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria devastated the island last week. The storm brought winds of up to 155 miles an hour to shore and never before seen surges of seawater onto the island. Since that time, the storm has created an ever-deepening humanitarian crisis for 3.4 million U.S. citizens.

“We are looking at a disaster of epic proportions, in some neighborhoods 80 percent of the homes were destroyed, utilities are out across the board including wastewater treatment,” Camden County Freeholder Carmen Rodriguez said. “I’ve been talking to members of my community who want to help and don’t know what the best resource would be, which is when I contacted the Puerto Rican Congress of New Jersey and together with Hispanic Affairs we set up the Boricuas from New Jersey para Puerto Rico fund with the South Jersey Credit Union.”

Earlier in the day, officials said that due to continuing restrictions on shipping into the island, perishable and nonperishable goods were not an option for this campaign. However, President Donald Trump has since [waived the Jones Act](#), a day after he said he was hesitant to waive federal restrictions in place on imports into the U.S. territory.

The Jones Act bans foreign-flagged ships from transporting goods between U.S. ports. Republicans and Democrats encouraged Trump to waive the act, saying it could help get much-needed supplies delivered to Puerto Rico more quickly and at a reduced cost. Trump had been hesitant to waive the act for what he called “business concerns.”

The relief effort the county will participate in focuses on monetary donations, according to officials. Collections will run through Oct. 8, when a statewide marathon will take place. After that, funds will be distributed to the United for Puerto Rico Foundation and the Salvation Army.

“The entire island of Puerto Rico has been greatly affected by this tragedy and the degree of devastation is massive,” Senator Nilsa Cruz-Perez said. “We need to focus as a community, State and nation on rebuilding Puerto Rico. Their residents are not only our fellow citizens, but to many of us, they are family.”

For more information on the relief effort, call the Camden County Office of Hispanic Affairs at 856-225-5312 or email them Hispanic@camdencounty.com. Information can also be found at the Puerto Rican Congress of New Jersey website at <http://puerto-rican-congress.com/>.