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## LEGISLATORS SECURE TROPICAL STORM IRENE REIMBURSEMENTS FOR BUCKLAND, COLRAIN & HAWLEY

*\$895,976 approved today in FY18 supplemental budget seven years after  
historic storm due to years of sustained advocacy by Hinds, Kulik and Mark*

**BOSTON** – Today, State Senator Adam G. Hinds (D- Pittsfield), State Representative Stephen Kulik (D- Worthington) and State Representative Paul Mark (D- Peru) jointly announce the approval of \$895,976 for three towns in a Fiscal Year 2018 supplemental budget that is now on the Governor's desk. This supplemental funding will be used to reimburse the Franklin County towns of Buckland, Colrain and Hawley for costs incurred during 2011's large and destructive Tropical Storm Irene.

Tropical Storm Irene swept through Massachusetts in August of 2011, leaving widespread damage. Damage was greatest in the hilltowns of western Massachusetts as the eye of the storm tracked westward, toward Albany, New York. High winds toppled trees and heavy rain caused widespread flooding of Connecticut River tributaries.

After the storm former Governor Deval Patrick requested, and former President Barack Obama approved, a Major Disaster Declaration for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Consequently, municipalities became eligible for Public Assistance which is financed on a state-federal cost share basis. The three towns submitted their costs to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and FEMA reimbursed them for 75% of the total approved costs. The Commonwealth agreed to provide its towns funding equal to the 25% non-federal cost share. However, FEMA did not certify costs for the towns' three largest projects until after Massachusetts made its final appropriation of disaster relief funds. With the state fund depleted, Buckland, Colrain and Hawley have been waiting for state reimbursement for seven years.

Hinds, Kulik and Mark have been working together to secure this long-awaited and overdue funding for Buckland, Colrain and Hawley for years. Former state Senators Benjamin Downing (D- Pittsfield) and Stan Rosenberg (D- Amherst) also joined this effort on behalf of the towns.

The original supplemental budget filed by Governor Baker H.4366, *An Act making appropriations for the fiscal year 2018 to provide for supplementing certain existing appropriations and for certain other activities and projects*, did not include this funding. When the House of Representatives debated this legislation on April 5<sup>th</sup>, it included language and an appropriation inserted by the House Committee on Ways & Means for the *"reimbursement to the towns of Buckland, Colrain and Hawley for costs incurred during tropical storm Irene."* The supplemental budget then passed the full House by a vote of 146-0.

Representative Stephen Kulik, who is Vice-Chair of the House Committee on Ways and Means, was pleased to see this funding be inserted into supplemental budget. "I thank the town officials in Buckland for their continued advocacy for this funding, as well as their counterparts in Colrain and Hawley who all provided us with the documentation needed to move this funding through the Legislature. My colleagues Senator Hinds and Representative Mark were great partners in bringing this long-standing problem to a successful conclusion. None of us will ever forget the destructive power of Tropical Storm Irene and the heavy impact it had on our communities. I am so pleased that the House and Senate have stepped up to provide the financial support our towns deserve."

"This much needed funding has been a long time coming, and I want to thank my colleagues and the town officials for hanging in there and never giving up on fighting for it. Tropical Storm Irene was devastating to the region, and the impact from that storm lingers on today. Securing this funding will help make our small towns whole for the costs they have borne restoring and repairing the beauty of our region with the limited resources they had available," said Mark.

On April 26<sup>th</sup> the Massachusetts Senate considered the supplemental budget. The funding was not included in the bill released by the Senate Committee on Ways & Means for debate. However, an amendment filed by Hinds and Rosenberg was unanimously adopted, thereby ensuring that funding for these towns was included in the Senate's version of the bill.

"This money will have a big impact on the municipal budgets in Buckland, Colrain and Hawley, and I am proud to stand up for them," said Hinds. "This appropriation is a great example of successful and effective teamwork to move local needs through state government."

To reconcile the differences between the House and Senate versions of the FY18 supplemental budget, a conference committee was appointed. The conference committee consisted of Representative Jeffery Sanchez, Representative Stephen Kulik, Representative Todd Smola, Senator Karen Spilka, Senator Joan Lovely, and Senator Vinny deMacedo.

The conference committee's report on the supplemental budget allots \$520,895 to the Town of **Buckland**, which it will use to repay a loan that was taken out following the storm for the purposes of cleaning up debris and repairing damaged roads and infrastructure. The Town of **Colrain** received \$258,000 and the Town of **Hawley** received \$117,081 for the same purpose.

The FY18 supplemental budget, H. 4514, is now on the Governor's desk for his review and signature. The Governor has 10 days to review and act on this legislation.

Fiscal Year 2018 ends on June 30, 2018.

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