

Congressional Disaster Relief Legislation Ignores Puerto Rico

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

Global Research, October 13, 2017

Region: [Latin America & Caribbean, USA](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#), [Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

VISIT MY NEW WEB SITE:

stephenlendman.org

([Home - Stephen Lendman](#)).

Contact at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net.

Hurricanes Maria and Irma caused vast destruction in Puerto Rico, creating humanitarian crisis conditions for millions.

Instead of massive amounts of vitally needed aid and debt relief, the Trump administration requested House and Senate members authorize a \$4.9 billion loan to the island as part of \$36.5 billion in disaster relief – plus a \$150 million loan, matching FEMA grants, increasing its unrepayable indebtedness instead of responsibly cancelling it.

Funds loaned are intended for maintaining basic government operations, nothing for devastated Puerto Ricans.

Most on the island still lack power. They have limited access to food, fuel and clean drinking water.

Estimated hurricane damage is around \$95 billion, according to Governor Ricardo Rossello.

“Puerto Rico is on the brink of a massive liquidity crisis that will intensify in the immediate future,” he said.

House legislation provides emergency funding for hurricane and wildfire relief – earmarked for business interests, not devastated Texas and Florida residents, or Californians affected by wildfires.

Legislation includes \$18.7 billion for FEMA’s disaster relief fund, another \$16 billion to replenish the flood insurance program.

House members passed legislation on Thursday, Senate members taking up similar legislation next week.

Puerto Rico is insolvent. Its indebtedness is around \$74 billion – plus another \$50 billion in

pension obligations. Last May it declared quasi-bankruptcy.

Creditors were unwilling to grant concessions. Pensioners and workers nearing retirement may lose out altogether.

Before hurricane devastation, Trump said they'll be no "bailout" for Puerto Rico. Unlike US counties, cities and other municipalities, states and US territories can't declare Chapter 9 bankruptcy, allowing them to restructure debt.

Puerto Rico faces a long, painful struggle ahead, debt-entrapped by creditors, ill-served by uncaring Washington, mismanaged by corrupt officials, a deplorable situation, affecting its poor and most vulnerable hardest – compounded by hurricane devastation and uncaring US officials.

Economist Mark Weisbrot explained cancelling Puerto Rico's debt and providing significant federal aid is its only chance to recover. Its residents are US citizens. Its political status denies them legal rights.

They're treated like colonial subjects, enduring crushing austerity because of the island's insolvency. They pay federal taxes without congressional representation, getting back pathetically little in return.

They suffer from mismanagement, political greed, widespread corruption, deplorable social services, and monied interests exploiting them, enforced by police state harshness.

Debt-entrapped, Puerto Rico is forced to pay bankers and other creditors at the expense of responsibly serving its residents.

Recovery under favorable conditions will take years. Given federal indifference to the island's misery, devastation in large parts of it could go unaddressed indefinitely.

VISIT MY NEW WEB SITE: stephenlendman.org ([Home - Stephen Lendman](http://stephenlendman.org)). Contact at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net.

My newest book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: How the US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

<http://www.claritypress.com/LendmanIII.html>

Listen to cutting-edge discussions with distinguished guests on the Progressive Radio News Hour on the Progressive Radio Network.

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Stephen Lendman](http://stephenlendman.org), Global Research, 2017

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Stephen Lendman](#)

About the author:

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago. He can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net. His new book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

<http://www.claritypress.com/LendmanIII.html> Visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com. Listen to cutting-edge discussions with distinguished guests on the Progressive Radio News Hour on the Progressive Radio Network. It airs three times weekly: live on Sundays at 1PM Central time plus two prerecorded archived programs.

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca