

Speaker Mike Johnson  
418 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Majority Leader Steve Scalise  
2049 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

August 20, 2024

Dear Speaker Johnson and Leader Scalise,

As we approach the respective anniversaries of Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Ida on August 23 and August 29, respectively, we, the undersigned current and former officials and first responders from the great state of Louisiana, ask that you schedule the bipartisan AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act for a vote in the United States House of Representatives, and push for its enactment before the end of the year.

As you are aware, AM radio is a critical part of our public warning systems. While many communications platforms can be used to provide public warnings and vital information, AM radio is unique in both its geographic reach and its ability to remain on and available when other systems such as cell and internet go down during disasters.

This was particularly true during Katrina and Ida, which knocked out almost every other form of communication. However, AM radio remained resilient, providing live, wall-to-wall, minute-to-minute coverage.

We have enclosed PDF copies of Sep 8, 2021 [Washington Post](#) and August 24, 2015 [BBC News](#) articles that provide further context on just how pivotal AM radio was in keeping Louisianans safe during both disasters. We know from experience — from the near-death on-air calls some of us fielded during the height of both disasters to the number of first responders and emergency management professionals who have attested to AM radio being the only communication tool they had during the worst of it all — that AM was responsible for saving countless lives.

Despite AM radio's proven importance in emergencies, a growing number of automakers have started removing them from their vehicles, particularly electric vehicles. These automakers are eliminating access to AM radio, and with it access to critical, often life-saving information, despite receiving billions of dollars in government subsidies.

Every former head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) from the Clinton through Trump administrations has warned that AM's removal is putting lives at risk. Current FEMA leadership has warned Congress that if automakers continue removing AM radios from vehicles, millions of Americans could lose access to "critical, life-saving" information during emergencies.

Those who were on the ground in Louisiana during and after these fateful storms know the important role AM radio plays in keeping Louisianans safe and informed — then and now.

The AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act enjoys bipartisan majority support in Congress and a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate. Scheduling the bill for a vote and finding a way to successfully enact it into law this year will signal to the great people of Louisiana that the lessons learned from Katrina and Ida have not been forgotten. It will also demonstrate to your constituents that Louisiana's powerful congressional delegation is doing everything in its power to honor the storm's victims and first responders, all while protecting the state from future emergencies.

And with the 2024 storm season heading into full swing, there is no better time to get this done. The urgency of this matter cannot be overstated. We ask that you pass this bill and send it to the president's desk as soon as possible to ensure that our state maintains the emergency tools needed to protect our friends and neighbors from future disasters.

Sincerely,

Lt. Gen. Russel L. Honoré  
Commander  
Joint Task Force Katrina

Richard Chatman  
Deputy Director  
New Orleans Office of Homeland Security &  
Emergency Preparedness

Dawson Primes, LEM  
Director  
Office of Homeland Security and Emergency  
Management  
Tangipahoa Parish Government

Paige Hargrove  
Executive Director  
Louisiana Emergency Response Network

Van Reed  
Director  
Office of Homeland Security and Emergency  
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St. Landry Parish

Clint Ory  
Director  
Office of Homeland Security and Emergency  
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Tracy Johnson  
Captain (Ret)  
Shreveport Fire Department

Scott Wells  
Former Federal Coordinating Officer  
FEMA Joint Field Office, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Chris Oakes  
Homeland Security Director  
Allen Parish

Joe Valienti, BS-LEM-B  
Director of Emergency Management  
Jefferson Parish

Kyle Boudoin  
Emergency Management Coordinator  
Jefferson Parish

John Ballance  
Sheriff  
Bienville Parish

Andy Brown  
Sheriff  
Jackson Parish

Brent Barnett  
Deputy Sheriff  
Jackson Parish

Thomas Jordan  
Former Public Health Emergency Response  
Coordinator  
Region 9 Louisiana Department of Health

Benedict Rousselle  
President, Plaquemines Parish (1999-2007)  
Representative, Louisiana House of  
Representatives District 105 (1996-1999)  
Member, Plaquemines Parish Council (1987-  
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Joe Foster  
Fire Chief  
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Sherman Q. Mack  
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Louisiana House of Representatives District 95

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Randy Fodel  
Chief of Police  
Slidell, LA