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Obama calls for immediate Sandy aid vote
By Ed O'Keefe , Updated: January 2, 2013

President Obama today called on the House to immediately pass a plan to provide federal aid to deal with damage caused by Hurricane Sandy, while House Speaker John A. Boehner (R-Ohio) announced a meeting on the issue this afternoon with lawmakers from New Jersey and New York.

The Senate passed a \$60 billion package last week that provides funding for the two states to begin rebuilding and mitigation projects. The House's failure to pass a measure by Thursday at noon would mean that the process would need to begin again from scratch.

"The Speaker is committed to getting this bill passed this month," Boehner spokesman Michael Steel said, in confirming the 3 p.m. meeting with concerned lawmakers.

Obama weighed in on the controversy in a White House statement issued shortly after the president returned to his Hawaii vacation.

"When tragedy strikes, Americans come together to support those in need," Obama said. "I urge Republicans in the House of Representatives to do the same, bring this important request to a vote today, and pass it without delay for our fellow Americans."

Boehner has told his colleagues that providing storm aid is his first priority for the next Congress, which begins Thursday afternoon. Aides noted that FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate recently told a House panel that his agency should be able to continue providing financial aid to affected regions until the spring, when it would then need to request more money from lawmakers.

Lawmakers from both parties reacted angrily to Tuesday night's surprise decision to not hold a vote on storm aid.

"These Republicans have no problem finding New York when they're out raising millions of dollars," Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.) told Fox News Wednesday morning. "They're in New York all the time filling their pockets with money from New Yorkers. I'm saying right now, anyone from New York or New Jersey who contributes one penny to congressional Republicans is out of their minds. Because what they did last night was put a knife in the back of New Yorkers and New Jerseyans. It was an absolute disgrace."