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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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To the Editor:

Seven weeks ago on Oct. 10, Hurricane Michael crossed the Florida panhandle and slammed into the heart of South Georgia farmland, leaving in its wake billions of dollars in damage to the state's No. 1 industry — agriculture — and devastating the lives of some very good, hardworking Georgians.

A Category 3 storm with 115 mph winds, Michael was the first major hurricane to directly hit the state in over a century.

Due to the severity of the damage, Gov. Nathan Deal called a Nov. 13 Special Session of the Georgia General Assembly to seek approval of \$270 million in state aid for affected areas. Most of the money merely was the required match for federal aid.

Deeply moved by the plights of their fellow Georgians, members of the Georgia General Assembly set aside politics for a few days and gave the funding bills overwhelming, bipartisan support. This meant a lot to those of us who represent South Georgia, especially since both parties were still shaking off the dust from the Nov. 6 general election.

The only exception to this goodwill was your District 8 representative, Matt Gurtler. Coming off his re-election the previous week, he could not resist the temptation to put his political ambition ahead of the needs of our people.

Instead of addressing his concerns about the aid bills prior to the vote, he simply pressed his "no" button and in subsequent media interviews passed off his disturbing lack of compassion as "conservative principles."

And in one interview, he lied. Asked how South Georgia representatives had reacted to his vote, he said we understood his position and *agreed* with him on many points.

I assure you that is not the case. No one agrees with your representative or his vote.

Moreover, in the two years he has served under the Gold Dome, I have yet to detect in Rep. Gurtler a willingness to work constructively on anything to help Georgians — your district included.

He actually is on record as saying he would vote against any kind of relief or aid for his *own* district were it to be hit with a natural disaster.

Simply voting against every use of state funds, in the annual budget or for any other purpose, is short-sighted and foolhardy. What would happen if the Georgia General Assembly also abdicated its responsibility to schools, public safety and other public services?

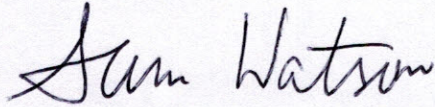
It's important to understand that the legislative process is designed to be exactly that — a process. Every bill has in it things some members dislike. So in committee meetings and then in the back-and-forth process between the two chambers, we work out our differences to the benefit of this state and its people.

However, Rep. Gurtler didn't participate in the process on the aid bills, even though the proposed appropriations bill was on his desk before the session began.

I have friends who reside in the 8th District. I know them to be kind-hearted and compassionate people. Surely they would not turn their backs on the people of South Georgia. But this is exactly what their state representative did.

Thank you for allowing me to set the record straight.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sam Watson".

Chairman Sam Watson, District 172
Georgia House of Representatives

On behalf of:

Chairman Jay Powell, House District 171
Chairman Penny Houston, House District 170
Chairman Gerald Greene, House District 151
Chairman Darlene Taylor, House District 173
Chairman Chad Nimmer, House District 178
Chairman Jason Shaw, House District 176
Chairman Ed Rynders House District 152
Chairman Buddy Harden, House District 148
Representative Dominic LaRiccica, House District 169
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Chairman Greg Kirk, Senate District 13
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