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Truck driver remembered for loving family



James Carroll with his granddaughters Rylenn and Brinley Smith in an undated family photograph. PROVIDED BY TONYA CARROLL

James Carroll drove to help in region's Helene recovery

Will Hofmann
Asheville Citizen Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

James Carroll loved hard. His granddaughters, Brinley and Rylenn Smith, were his "Pappy's Princesses." He considered his step-children his own, his wife Tonya Carroll told the Citizen Times July 18. Aside from family, Carroll loved "anything with a motor in it."

James died in a Dec. 7 accident along U.S. 19

East in Yancey County. His is one of 108 North Carolina deaths attributed to the Tropical Storm Helene, and one of at least three truck drivers who died months after the storm while helping in Western North Carolina's recovery. Their deaths have been attributed to the storm by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services.

The 38-year-old truck driver worked across the Southeast with "great pride," Tonya said. The job took him to WNC shortly after Helene hit the

See CARROLL, Page 2A

Inside

Among 'indirect' Helene deaths are fathers, friends and truck drivers, 2A

TROPICAL STORM HELENE

\$7.6 billion awarded in federal, state aid so far

Jacob Biba
Asheville Citizen Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

The federal and state governments have provided approximately \$7.6 billion in total aid to Western North Carolina in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Helene, according to an Aug. 15 report from the Governor's Recovery Office for Western North Carolina, or GROW NC.

The reported figure is about 12.8% of the nearly \$60 billion in damage and needs the region sustained after the September 2024 storm, which killed more than 100 people and damaged more than 38,000 homes across the state.

According to the report, the state has provided more than \$2.9 billion in funding, including \$2 billion in new appropriations, with the remainder reallocated or redirected from other appropriated funds and state agencies, as of June 30.

Meanwhile, only \$1.6 billion in federal funding has been disbursed, according to the report, while another \$3.1 billion has been awarded but requires additional approval steps to be completed before disbursement. That figure includes \$1.4 billion from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development slated for the state's single family home repair program that launched in June.

According to the report, the Federal Emergency Management Agency disbursed \$1.1 billion for programs like individual assistance, which provided temporary housing for storm survivors. Other federal agencies like the U.S. Small Business administration, U.S. Department of Labor and the Federal Highway Administration disbursed the remainder, according to the report.

The \$4.71 billion in federal funding awarded as of June 30 is about 8% of the total need, well short of the 48% the state has requested from the federal government.

Even if the state's federal funding request of more than \$28 billion is ultimately granted in full, it would still fall short of what other states received following major natural disasters.

After Hurricane Katrina, which hit the Gulf Coast region of the U.S. in 2005, the federal government covered

See AID, Page 2A

Trump mail-in vote stance stirs fight

Presidents have no legal role in running elections

Bart Jansen
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump's latest push to end absentee voting has ignited a firestorm of criticism and intense debate about the nation's election rules as the next midterm and presidential campaigns kick into

gear.

Election-law experts said a president has no role in governing elections. Advocacy groups threatened lawsuits aiming to block Trump. And Democrats braced for a political fight heading into the 2026 and 2028 election cycles as they look to rebound after a disastrous 2024 campaign.

"The Constitution gives states and Congress the power to run elections," said Michael Waldman, CEO of the Brennan Center for Justice at New York

University. "Presidents have no lawful role."

But White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters Aug. 19 that Trump would work with lawmakers to end mail-in voting because "this is a priority for the president."

Mail-in voting is widespread and popular. Out of 155 million votes cast in 2024, nearly 47 million were mailed in, according to the Election Assistance

See MAIL-IN VOTE, Page 5A



A woman drops off her mail-in ballot Aug. 5 in Meridian Township, Michigan. Advocacy groups say they'll sue to block President Donald Trump's push to end absentee voting. MATTHEW DAE SMITH/LANSING STATE JOURNAL FILE

