



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Field Hearing Statement of Emergency Management & Technology Subcommittee Ranking Member Troy Carter (D-LA)

Emergency Preparedness: Examining Federal, State, and Local Coordination in Coastal Communities

November 28, 2023

I want to welcome everyone to Louisiana's Second Congressional District—my home.

Today, we are gathered at Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO) to discuss a topic so many New Orleanians are very familiar with and that is emergency preparedness. I would like to thank the Southern University staff and campus community for hosting today's hearing.

I want to thank our distinguished panel of witnesses here to share your expertise with the Subcommittee. I want to thank Subcommittee Chairman D'Esposito for agreeing to hold today's hearing. I, also, want to thank all my colleagues for coming to today's hearing to learn more about the challenges and successes of emergency preparedness in my District.

New Orleans is ground zero for so much of the conversation on emergency preparedness. Hurricane Katrina was one of the worst natural disasters in the recent memory of the United States. Hurricane Katrina was followed by Hurricane Rita just a few weeks later. The hurricanes resulted in loss of life and property damage. In the aftermath of the hurricanes, the response efforts were scrutinized and many policies were changed for the better.

There have been many other disasters to hit my District, too, including Hurricanes Ike and Ida, and the historic flooding in August 2016. Because of these disasters, we have a better understanding of the importance of Federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial officials prioritizing emergency preparedness to ensure that our communities are equipped to respond to disasters quickly and recover with dignity.

The threat posed by climate change makes the conversation on preparedness even more important. The effects of climate change are being felt worldwide, which includes more frequent and severe natural disasters like hurricanes, droughts, and wildfires. At the Federal level, investment in mitigation strategies have become a priority for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). I am pleased that the Biden Administration recently announced nearly \$2 billion in grant funding to help communities mitigate the impacts climate change.

Flooding has increasingly become a concern in Louisiana, contributing to the increasing costs of flood insurance policies. Louisianians rely on the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to offer reasonably priced coverage. However, FEMA's new Risk Rating 2.0 system, cuts program. Risk Rating 2.0 will result in a 134% average increase in flood insurance costs for single-family homes in Louisiana, phased in over time. This policy will leave many Louisianians vulnerable to extreme weather events because they cannot afford to pay for flood insurance.

Another concern facing my constituents is Small Business Administration loans. Many of my constituent's own businesses, and when disasters strike, they have to take out loans to make repairs and stay afloat. Unfortunately, some of the small businesses are still paying loans years after a disaster strikes. I hope to hear from our witnesses today about how you are working to make sure that flood insurance does not become a luxury that only few can afford and ways to help our small businesses.

Since the terrorists' attacks of 9/11, emergency preparedness has also included providing Federal resources for combatting threats and acts of violence. The Department of Homeland Security's preparedness grant programs, which include the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), State Homeland Security Program (SHSP), and the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP), which help communities prepare for and address threats.

In 2022, the Southern University campus in Baton Rouge was one of many historically black colleges or universities (HBCUs) across the country that was targeted with a bomb threat. Making sure that the DHS preparedness grants reach HBCUs and other targeted places is essential. I am a proud advocate for the DHS preparedness grants and hope to hear from our witnesses today how these programs are helping Louisianians.

Lastly, I would like to emphasize, as we continue to face more frequent and severe emergencies, it is becoming increasingly clear that our emergency management systems need to prioritize equity. Vulnerable populations are often hit the hardest by disasters. Building equity into emergency management means ensuring that all individuals and communities have equal access to resources and support before, during, and after a disaster. This not only helps to prevent further harm, but also strengthens overall resilience. In May, I joined Ranking Member Thompson as a co-chair of the first-ever Congressional Disaster Equity and Building Resilience Caucus. The Caucus aims to promote equity in disaster preparedness and response and provide a valuable forum to discuss Federal policies that impact underserved communities in disasters.

Again, I want to thank Southern University/SUNO for hosting, our witnesses for participating in today's hearing, and my colleagues for making time to learn about my district.

With that, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today on how we can continue to build and support emergency preparedness for the people of Louisiana.

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