

Statement of Ranking Member Laura Richardson (D-CA)

“ENSURING THE TRANSPARENCY, EFFECTIVENESS, AND EFFICIENCY OF HOMELAND SECURITY GRANTS”

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE, AND COMMUNICATIONS

Thursday, April 26, 2012

Today we will hear from our vital State and local stakeholders about FEMA’s suite of preparedness grants and the impact of cuts on emergency preparedness and response efforts.

In particular, we will hear concerns related to the Department’s FY 2013 budget proposal, which seeks to consolidate 16 separate, fully functioning, vital grant programs under the National Preparedness Grants Program (NPGP).

Last month, the Subcommittee received testimony from FEMA regarding the consolidation proposal.

But today’s hearing will be more informative since we will hear from our State and local partners who are essential within the homeland security enterprise.

The Nation’s ability to respond effectively to manmade and natural disasters requires State and local first responders to be adequately equipped and trained.

Administrator Fugate has stated on several occasions that the capabilities built by FEMA’s suite of preparedness grants has helped with recent emergency response and enhanced the Nation’s capacity for catastrophic disasters.

We must not abandon our commitment to partner with State and locals by stripping them of resources needed to preserve the capabilities built over the last 10 years.

In last month’s hearing, Mayor Nutter gave persuasive testimony about the ill-effects of the Department’s decision to consolidate vital independent grants, such as the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), Port Security Grant Program (PSGP) and Transit Security Grant Program (TSGP).

Separate grant programs were created by Congress to close specific homeland security gaps identified by the 9/11 Commission.

It is unfortunate that the Department felt compelled to put forward this consolidation proposal without conducting the necessary outreach with our State and local partners.

But it is important to recognize what compelled the Department to create this proposal.

Unfortunately, my Republican colleagues have decided to cut preparedness grant programs to State and locals over the last two years.

As I have stated previously, cuts to homeland security grant programs are short-sighted and fails to take into account the need to preserve capabilities to deal with more intense natural disasters and changing terrorism threat.

Furthermore, ensuring the Nation's security is directly related to our ability to continue to improve the economy.

In my district in California, the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles are two of the busiest seaports in the United States, which support's the Nation's economy.

Our ports, transportation hubs, and urban areas must continue to be protected in order to provide the safe environment to spur the economy.

In doing so, we must continue to rely on the regional governance structure and local-driven risk identification process that has helped build vital preparedness capabilities.

I admire FEMA's attempts to promote efficiencies and streamline the grant process.

But I do not believe that another drastic change to the preparedness grant program is the right approach.

Those best able to identify efficiencies and improvements are represented at today's hearing.

We know that engaging our State and local stakeholders facilitates – transparency, accountability, and effective management of homeland security grants.

National preparedness can only be successful when all stakeholders are afforded opportunities to be at the table and provide substantive input.

I look forward to hearing the panels' views regarding the FY 2013 proposal, sustainment, recently released THIRA guidance, and establishment of performance measures.