

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Homeland Security Grants: Measuring Our Investments***

March 19, 2013 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Emergency Preparedness, Response and Communications subcommittee hearing entitled “Homeland Security Grants: Measuring Our Investments”:

“From the Urban Area Security Initiative and the State Homeland Security Program to the Port Security Grant Program and the Transit Security Grant Program, the preparedness grant programs administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency help build critical disaster response capabilities in every Congressional District.

Over the past ten years, we have invested \$39 billion in these and other homeland security grant programs.

When we go back to our Districts, we hear anecdotal stories about how Homeland Security Grant program funding supported a table top exercise to test a local Emergency Operations Plan or to purchase technology that will help first responders do their jobs quicker, better, and safer.

Communities across the country are proud of the preparedness capabilities they have worked to develop over the past ten years – a feat made possible by support from Homeland Security Grant Program.

But now, these capabilities may be mothballed.

Federal, State, and local budgets are stretched more and more every year. Large grant awards that helped State and local governments prepare for man-made and natural disasters are becoming less common, but the threats disasters pose are not.

With less Federal support available, State and local governments are struggling to maintain the capabilities achieved over the past decade.

Our oversight responsibilities include making sure FEMA uses its limited preparedness funding wisely.

For at least five years, this Committee has been asking FEMA to develop capability objectives and metrics to help State and local governments prioritize grant investments.

I am also concerned that FEMA has not yet implemented the grant management and oversight practices necessary to ensure that the limited grant money available is spent effectively and efficiently.

I am disappointed to read one after another GAO and IG report identifying management failures that have led to duplicative purchases or increase administrative costs.

Now, more than ever, FEMA must develop and implement the tools necessary to effectively manage the limited grant funds awarded each year.

We cannot afford for Homeland Security Grant Program dollars to be spent on unnecessary equipment because metrics are not available to determine whether a State or local government has sufficient resources to meet its preparedness needs.

And we cannot afford for Homeland Security Grant Program dollars to be spent on duplicative purchases because FEMA has not taken the action necessary to ensure grantees use appropriate inventory

practices.

Although I understand that FEMA has made some progress in implementing the recommendations of GAO and the DHS IG to improve grant management – and I was encouraged by the release of the National Preparedness Report last year – I am interested to learn from Deputy Administrator Manning how FEMA will continue its efforts to manage and measure the effectiveness of grants.

Finally, I would like to make a few brief comments on the National Preparedness Grant Program.

As you may recall, Deputy Administrator Manning, Members of this Committee, as authorizers, were surprised to read – for the first time – a proposal to consolidate 16 targeted grant programs in the Fiscal Year 2013 budget request last year.

Members of this Committee rejected the proposal, expressing concern about the Department’s failure to work with authorizers and other stakeholders during the development of the NPGP.

Appropriators were similarly apprehensive, and have not provided funding in any of the Fiscal Year 2013 spending bills.

I understand that the Administration plans to submit the NPGP proposal again in the Fiscal Year 2014 budget request.

Before doing so, I would urge you to provide Members of this Committee a detailed briefing explaining how the grant proposal was developed, how the feedback of stakeholders was solicited and incorporated, specific details about the funding structure, and how you expect the new grant program will address the flaws in the Homeland Security Grant Program identified by DHS IG and GAO.”

#

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
H2-117, Ford House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515
Phone: (202) 226-2616 | Fax: (202) 226-4499
<http://chsdemocrats.house.gov>