

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****The Federal Emergency Management Agency's FY2015  
Budget Request: Ensuring Effective Preparedness,  
Response, and Communications***

March 25, 2014 (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 “The Federal Emergency Management Agency’s FY2015 Budget Request: Ensuring Effective Preparedness, Response, and Communications”:

“As authorizers, we have a responsibility to understand the needs and priorities of the Department.

It is our duty to vet the various budget proposals included in the budget request, and to question the assumptions underlying conclusions that program and policy changes will increase efficiency and achieve savings.

The level of examination required of us goes beyond a Full Committee hearing on the entire DHS budget request.

In the past, Subcommittees this Committee have held hearings to more closely review the budget request of the offices and components within DHS.

Unfortunately, that is no longer the common practice.

In light of restrictive budget caps, we need to understand what programs at DHS need resources, how we can invest funds more effectively, and whether components can sustain existing programs under budget limitations.

In short, we need to understand how adhering to the budget caps will cost homeland security.

So, I appreciate this Subcommittee’s effort to take a closer look at FEMA’s budget proposal.

Administrator Fugate, for the third year in a row, FEMA proposes to consolidate 18 target grant programs into the National Preparedness Grant Program (NPGP).

The last two times FEMA submitted the grant consolidation proposal, Members of this panel expressed concern about the apparent lack of stakeholder outreach.

Members questioned whether FEMA requested sufficient funding for the program.

And were the lack of detail

This is the third time FEMA has proposed the NPGP, and it seems that we’re about to have the same conversation we had two years ago when the program was first proposed.

The stakeholders who have contacted my office said that the limited “outreach” from FEMA has taken the form of briefings, rather than engagement, and that it has been sporadic, rather than ongoing.

Indeed, Congress only gets roped into the discussion in the month or so following the budget submission.

FEMA requests about \$1.04 billion for NPGP for FY 15.

But when the Homeland Security Grant Program was funded at that level in FY 12, FEMA echoed the concerns raised by Democrats on this panel that that funding was not sufficient to address the vulnerabilities of State and local preparedness capabilities.

With State and local budgets stretched as thin as they are today, I find it hard to believe that State and local programs need less support today than they did two years ago.

I understand that \$300 million in addition funding for NPGP was request in the President's Opportunity, Growth, and Security Initiative.

But the practical reality is that the OGSF funding is unlikely to come to fruition under the current House leadership.

And I have to believe that FEMA and the Administration understood the OGSF funding to be a long shot when it was proposed.

So, I want to understand the rationale behind seeking a \$300 million reduction for State and local programs.

Finally, given the important role the Homeland Security Grant Program has played in strengthening information sharing and preparedness related to terrorist attacks, we wanted to understand how the NPGP would work.

This year, we received legislative language for NPGP.

We did not, however, get any more clarity about the structure of the program.

Indeed, depending on what document you read – the Congressional Budget Justification or the legislative proposal – it is possible to draw different conclusions. After two years, that is disappointing.”

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