

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 9, 2025

The Honorable Mark E. Green
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Green:

We write to request that you immediately convene an oversight hearing on the Federal government's preparedness for and response to the catastrophic flooding that occurred in Central Texas over the July 4th weekend to determine whether the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is adequately resourced to help states and localities prepare for and respond to future disasters. The flooding—which has killed over 100 people, displaced hundreds, and devastated communities along the Guadalupe River—raises serious concerns about FEMA's readiness and highlights the damaging role that the Trump administration has played in weakening the Federal government's capacity to respond to disasters.

Breakdowns in the public alert system during the Central Texas flooding reveal potential weaknesses in how emergency warnings are communicated and acted upon. Although the National Weather Service (NWS) issued flood warnings, many residents in Kerr County—especially campers and those in remote areas—never received them. Reportedly, local officials failed to send alerts through FEMA's Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) until two days after the flooding began.¹

The potential gaps in the emergency alert system during this catastrophe did not occur in a vacuum. The Trump administration has taken alarming steps to weaken FEMA's ability to carry out its mission. President Trump has repeatedly proposed eliminating and phasing out FEMA and shifting responsibility to states, stating that if governors cannot handle the aftermath of a disaster, “then maybe they shouldn't be governor.”²

Former FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell warned just last month: “The consequences of losing FEMA or weakening its ability to function would be catastrophic... Eliminating FEMA does not eliminate disasters—it just eliminates our ability to help the people that are impacted by

¹ Brianna Sacks, Scott Dance and Arelis R. Hernández, *Texas Hill Country is no stranger to flash floods. Why were so many caught off guard?*, Washington Post (July 6, 2025), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2025/07/06/texas-flood-risks-warnings-alerts-preparation>.

² *Donald Trump speaks to press in the Oval Office*, YOUTUBE (WFAA, June 10, 2025), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AreL82R-LFY&ab_channel=WFAA.

them.”³ MaryAnn Tierney—the former acting deputy secretary of the Department of Homeland Security and former acting deputy administrator of FEMA—wrote after the Texas flooding that “with each passing day, the Federal government is becoming less prepared to face the next big disaster.”⁴

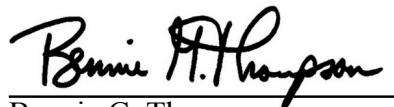
Tierney’s warning reflects not a future threat, but a crisis already unfolding. Tierney observed that “Since January, [FEMA] has lost more than 20 percent of its permanent staff—its most experienced, field-ready responders,” noting that the agency cannot replace these staff or bring in new talent because of hiring restrictions.⁵ FEMA’s staffing losses stem directly from politically driven mandates carried out by President Trump’s so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). Tierney further noted that 7,000 emergency personnel were locked out of FEMA training that “isn’t theoretical. It saves lives.”⁶ Further, the Trump administration has defunded FEMA Corps and has allowed critical contracts—such as those for evacuation logistics, shelter operations, and flood insurance—to lapse.⁷ Trump’s hiring freezes and staff purges have drained institutional knowledge and crippled FEMA’s readiness—all before Congress even considers the president’s proposed \$646 million budget cut for fiscal year 2026.

At the same time, the Trump administration has canceled the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program, clawing back \$4.5 billion that would have helped communities prepare for disasters. Over \$510 million of these funds were reportedly intended for the state of Texas.⁸

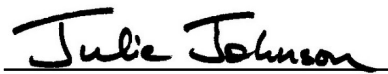
The danger is not over—in fact, the most active part of the hurricane season has not yet begun. Without a fully staffed and adequately funded FEMA, communities impacted by the flooding in Texas—as well as communities that will be affected by disasters in the future—may face unnecessary obstacles in accessing assistance, rebuilding critical infrastructure, and receiving long-term hazard mitigation support.

We urge you to hold a hearing immediately to examine the Trump administration’s actions to undermine FEMA, assess the consequences for disaster readiness and recovery, and determine how Congress can ensure that the Agency remains capable of fulfilling its mission.

Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security



Julie Johnson
Vice Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security

³ *Facing Elimination: A Conversation on the Value of FEMA*: Briefing Before the H. Comm. on Homeland Sec. (Democratic Members), 119th Cong., 1st sess. (June 26, 2025), <https://democrats-homeland.house.gov/activities/other-events/facing-elimination-a-conversation-on-the-value-of-fema>.

⁴ MaryAnn Tierney, *Texas Hill Country Is Underwater, and America’s Emergency Lifeline Is Fraying*, New York Times (July 7, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/07/opinion/texas-floods-fema.html>.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Ranking Members Larsen and Stanton Statement on Trump Administration’s Short-Sighted Elimination of Successful Resilience Initiative*, Press Release, House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure (Apr. 4, 2025), <https://democrats-transportation.house.gov/news/press-releases/ranking-members-larsen-and-stanton-statement-on-trump-administrations-short-sighted-elimination-of-successful-resilience-initiative>.



Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa
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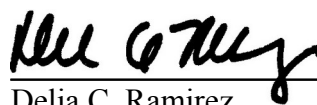
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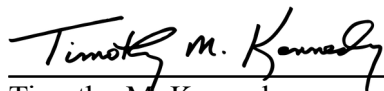
Seth Magaziner
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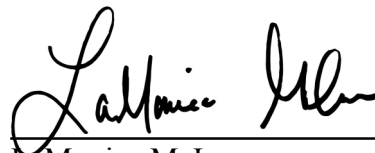
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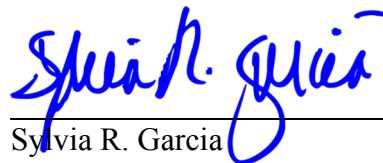
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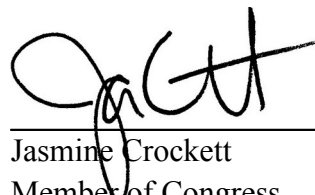
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