



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Houston Strong: Hurricane Harvey Lessons Learned and the Path

Forward

April 9, 2018

Hurricane Harvey made landfall as a Category 4 storm in August and caused approximately \$125 BILLION in damages. Harvey was just one of 17 named storms in 2017, last year's Atlantic hurricane season one of the most active on record.

Compared to the debacle in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands after Hurricane Maria, the Federal response to Hurricane Harvey in support of State and local efforts was, in a word, "better."

FEMA had supplies and personnel pre-positioned before Harvey made landfall. FEMA also provided 3 million meals and 3 million liters of water for Harvey survivors.

Soon after the storm made landfall, there were more than 31,000 Federal employees on the ground in support of the response.

That said, we know there is still significant room for improvement in how FEMA and its Federal partners responded to Harvey, particularly in underserved communities, with vulnerable populations, and in outlying areas.

Often those with the least means live in the areas hardest hit by disasters, so we must be particularly cognizant of the needs of these communities during both response and recovery.

For the witnesses on the first panel, I hope to hear about your support to and coordination with State and local partners on response and recovery efforts after Hurricane Harvey.

I also want to hear about what lessons Harvey and the other 2017 storms have to teach us as we approach the 2018 hurricane season.

For the witnesses on the second panel, I hope to hear your perspectives on the Federal response efforts and learn what we can do to support your recovery going forward.

Finally, I would note reports of troubling failures by the American Red Cross to provide expected assistance to those affected by Harvey, to the point of being a "no-show" in many communities.

For an agency chartered by Congress and authorized in the Stafford Act to provide much-needed assistance to Americans in times of disaster, this is unacceptable.

I hope to hear from our witnesses today about their experiences with the Red Cross after Harvey.

Preparing for, responding to, and recovering from natural disasters like Hurricane Harvey takes all stakeholders coming together and doing part on behalf of survivors.

Of course, the Federal government plays an important role in that effort.

As I said when Administrator Brock Long testified before this Committee recently, FEMA's mission is supposed to be "helping people before, during, and after disasters."

It is our job to conduct the oversight necessary to ensure the agency fulfills that mission.

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