



COMMITTEE ON
**HOMELAND
SECURITY**
DEMOCRATS

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, *Ranking member*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

Employee Misconduct: How Can FEMA Improve Integrity of its Workforce

Subcommittee on Oversight and Management Efficiency

July 27, 2017

I want to begin my remarks by expressing my appreciation to the men and women of FEMA for the incredible work they do on behalf of our Nation. Secretary Kelly has stated that the men and women of DHS, which includes FEMA, are exceptional and dedicated professionals.

Unfortunately, there are some—including the President of the United States—that fail appreciate the service and commitment of the federal employee. President Trump has made it clear through budget cuts and hiring freezes that he does not understand the critically important work of FEMA and other agencies across our government.

Today, my colleagues across the aisle are perpetuating this lack of understanding by asserting that the FEMA workforce has an integrity problem, ostensibly based on a recent GAO report. However, my reading of the report does not support such an inference.

Instead, the report states that FEMA needs to do a better job of documenting and communicating policies related to how misconduct is handled at FEMA. I certainly agree with GAO's conclusion that clearly documented policies and procedures for all FEMA workers are necessary, and I look forward to the agency carrying out GAO's recommendations. I also hope to engage with GAO today on their findings.

I also expect to confirm that the overwhelming majority of FEMA employees are dedicated public servants who carry out the agency's mission with integrity, showing up at locations across the country with little notice in some of the most stressful and dangerous environments possible. Supporting the workforce and focusing on improving morale should be a top priority of this Committee.

That is why this Congress I have introduced legislation, co-sponsored by every Democratic member of this Committee, to support morale among the DHS workforce by establishing a Chief Learning and Engagement Officer, an Employee Engagement Steering Committee, and the Secretary's Employee Award Program at the Department.

These are the areas that help improve morale and employee engagement and help move the FEMA workforce in the right direction. Indeed, studies show that effective leadership is the number one determinate of employee satisfaction and is therefore integral to the productivity and efficiency of an agency.

I encourage my colleagues to realize that better training, fair policies, and recognition of good work are ways to improve the FEMA workforce. I hope on this Committee we can work on a bipartisan basis to do just that.

#

Media contact: Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978