



Supporting Those Who Serve

February 2, 2012

The Honorable Peter King
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
H2-176 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bennie Thompson
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
H2-117 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman King and Ranking Member Thompson,

We write on behalf of the elected and appointed officials of our nation's cities and counties and their fire services and emergency managers to urge the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Congress to engage in a direct conversation with all local and state partners before considering any proposals to change how the State and Local Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) is implemented, or how appropriated funds are administered by the Department.

Everyone—the Administration, Congress, and state and local officials—wants to ensure the nation's homeland security and emergency management programs are successful. We are concerned, however, that recent proposals to restructure the HSGP would move us in the wrong direction and make it harder to achieve the goal of protecting Americans in their local communities.

As FEMA begins to implement changes to HSGP as required by both the FY 2012 appropriations law and the Presidential Policy Directive 8 (PPD-8), and as you consider the FY 2013 budget request, we respectfully ask that you keep in mind the following principles:

- 1. Any proposals to change homeland security grant programs must be developed in concert with all stakeholders.** The suite of state and local homeland security grant programs were the result of significant negotiations not only between the executive branch and Congress, but also among the intergovernmental organizations and stakeholders. This includes local elected and appointed officials, as well as those who play a key role in executing street level terrorism prevention and preparedness activities in our neighborhoods—our nation's fire services, law enforcement, and other front line personnel. Failure to include these key stakeholders in decisions related to proposed changes to the homeland security grants may result in less effective homeland security programs at the state and local levels.

- 2. Grant recipients must be transparent on distribution of federal funds, and subgrantees must not be overburdened with additional requirements.** This will allow for better oversight, ensuring that funds are not only distributed by the letter of the law, but also in its spirit. We believe that to the maximum extent possible, funding should be distributed to prepare local first responders with planning, training, exercise, and equipment activities, particularly those that foster a regional and coordinated emergency response. Grant funds should be used to address risks and vulnerabilities in communities and help build national capabilities.

The current fiscal constraints that localities are facing are forcing our members to make very difficult programmatic and personnel choices. When coupled with the reduction in state and local homeland security funding both last year and this year, it has become even more important that the limited dollars available be spent as effectively as possible so that localities can protect the public.

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you or your staff to discuss the path ahead for intergovernmental partnerships to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorism in the United States. Mitchel Herckis, Principal Associate for Human Development and Public Safety at the National League of Cities, will be in touch with your office to schedule a meeting and respond to any questions regarding this letter. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

National Association of Counties

National League of Cities

The U.S. Conference of Mayors

U.S. Council of the International Association of Emergency Managers

International Association of Fire Chiefs

International Association of Fire Fighters

National Volunteer Fire Council