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WEATHERING THE STORM: A STATE AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

FIELD HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE, AND COMMUNICATIONS

OF THE

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ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS

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WEATHERING THE STORM: A STATE AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Friday, June 10, 2011

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS,
RESPONSE, AND COMMUNICATIONS,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
Clearwater, FL.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:00 a.m., in the City Council Chambers, Clearwater City Hall, 112 S. Osceola Avenue, Clearwater, Florida, Hon. Gus M. Bilirakis [Chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Bilirakis and Clarke of Michigan.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. The Committee on Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications will come to order.

The subcommittee is meeting today to receive testimony on the efforts of State, local, and non-governmental organizations to prepare for and respond to natural disasters, terrorist attacks, and other emergencies.

I want to start by welcoming Congressman Clarke, my very good friend, and all of our witnesses to sparkling Clearwater, Florida, Florida's Ninth Congressional District. Thank you for coming.

I appreciate the effort taken by all those involved to have this important field hearing—and it is very important. This is an official Congressional hearing as opposed to a town hall meeting, and as such, we must abide by certain rules of the Committee on Homeland Security and of the House of Representatives. I kindly wish to remind all guests today that demonstrations from the audience—I do not believe there will be any—including applause and verbal outbursts, as well as the use of signs and placards are a violation of the rules of the House of Representatives. It is important that we respect the decorum and the rules of this committee. I have also been requested to state that photography and cameras are limited to accredited press only.

The Mayor is scheduled to be here. He has not arrived yet, but when he does arrive, I would like to recognize him, I believe he would like to formally welcome us.

Now I recognize myself for an opening statement.

I am pleased that we could convene this hearing at the start of what NOAA predicts to be an above-average hurricane season and during what can only be described as an active year for disasters,

unfortunately. So far this year, communities throughout the United States have experienced thwarted terror plots, tornadoes, severe winter weather, flooding and, of course, the tsunami warning and wildfires.

While disaster response is primarily a local responsibility, FEMA has an important role to play in supporting the State, local, and private sector, and of course, VOADs, which is the Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters. Those are the partners such as the Red Cross—and we will hear from the Red Cross this morning.

I look forward to hearing from our distinguished panel of witnesses about your experiences working with FEMA and your suggestions for changes that would further enhance the organization. In addition, I would like to hear about your response preparations for natural disasters and terrorist attacks, what successes you have had and what challenges you continue to face.

I am also interested in your perspective on efforts to mitigate the consequences of a disaster through individual and community preparedness. I continuously stress the need for my constituents to enhance their preparedness by developing emergency plans and kits. It is so important that we work to build a culture of preparedness. All too often individuals do not prepare because they do not think a natural disaster or terrorist attack will impact them. But as the disasters that have occurred across the country this year illustrate, disasters can happen anywhere and often with little notice. We cannot afford to become complacent—that is the bottom line.

In addition to efforts to enhance preparedness, I believe we must do more to enhance our resilience to disasters. That is why I have introduced the Hurricane and Tornado Mitigation Investment Act of 2011, which would provide a tax credit to individuals and businesses owners who make improvements to their property that will help mitigate hazards. These efforts, such as increasing the durability of roof coverings, or reinforcing the connections between roofs and walls, can help to reduce loss of life and property damage and speed recovery.

Last, I would like to hear how we can help you as you work to meet the many challenges you face in preparing for and responding to natural disasters and terrorist attacks. We want to be your partners in preparedness.

With that, I once again thank you for appearing before the subcommittee today and look forward to your valuable testimony.

Now I recognize my good friend, the gentleman from Michigan, Mr. Hansen Clarke, for an opening statement.

Mr. CLARKE of Michigan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you.

Mr. CLARKE of Michigan. My name is Hansen Clarke, a Member of Congress from Michigan's 13th District. That includes Detroit and surrounding suburbs. Our area has the busiest international border crossing of North America. We are at risk, great risk of a terrorist attack and, although we have not been hit by hurricanes, just recently, in the last couple of weeks, areas in the State of Michigan, urban areas, have been hit by tornadoes. That has been virtually without precedent in the area.

While responding to a natural disaster or terrorist attack may involve similar activities and functions, we are aware that preparing

for a natural disaster or human-caused accident is very different than preparing to guard against a terrorist attack. So that is why, for me, it is important to hear your point of view on how we could better improve our grant programs. Especially I would like to hear directly from you on your assessment of emergency management performance grants, your comments on the funding levels, how the matching requirements have been working.

Also, I want to commend the Chairman. His focus today on this issue of being prepared against natural disasters, he is right on the mark. Just yesterday, I was in the lobby of a business and I saw this magazine cover, *Newsweek,* "Weather Panic: Is this the new normal and we are hopelessly unprepared."

This article, if I can just read, it says, "In a world of climate change, freak storms are the new normal. Why we are unprepared for the harrowing future."

So, you know, whether you agree with the premise that climate change could be a cause in much of the activity that we have received in terms of fires and floods and tornadoes, nonetheless, the Chairman is absolutely right. We are at risk of more natural disasters. We need to be prepared for them.

My final note though in being here is I want to underscore something that has been really glossed over or not recognized at all by the National media, and that is how we in Congress, especially in the House, work together. If you turn on the news, all you hear about is the bickering and the divisiveness going on in Congress, the fact that members cannot communicate.

I am honored to serve with your Chairman, Gus Bilirakis. He is a good man, he works with me, he listens to the needs of my district and he has me involved in the decision-making process of this very important subcommittee. He supported our efforts to remove that restriction on funding because he realized that Tampa and Detroit, we are in the same situation right now. We are at high risk for an emergency, but yet many of our political leaders around the country do not choose to fully recognize that.

So in addition to the substance of this hearing, which is of absolute importance to this region and our country, I think it is also important for me to underscore the fact that your Chairman represents the type of leadership that will allow the House of Representatives and the Congress to move forward to really look and respond to the needs of our community because he is able to look beyond political concerns and look at the concerns of our people here. So it is an honor for me to be here, Mr. Chairman.

[The statement of Hon. Clarke of Michigan follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. HANSEN CLARKE

JUNE 10, 2011

Good morning. Thank you Chairman Bilirakis for convening this important hearing on the frontlines of hurricane response. It is good to get a feel for the situation on the ground and speak with citizens and State and local officials, who are really the ones who respond when disaster strikes.

It is vitally important that we provide them with the support they need, so their testimony today will be very valuable in understanding that need. Thank you to all of those first responders here for your service in protecting our communities, and thanks especially to our witnesses for appearing to provide expert testimony here today.

Each community faces its own challenges and the local responders there are best prepared to address and handle a disaster response.

As the Representative of the 13th district of Michigan, I represent the city of Detroit, which has one of our Nation's busiest border crossings. Like this region, we have our own waterway (the Great Lakes), our own extreme weather conditions (floods and sub-zero temperatures), and our own infrastructure needs.

While Tampa region emergency managers have to annually plan for an intense hurricane season, emergency managers in my district have to prepare for brutal winter storms.

Both urban areas maintain a common bond in understanding the need to ensure constant readiness for man-made and natural disasters.

THE NEED IS STILL GREAT

Unfortunately, over the last several years we have seen more intense and devastating natural disasters, internationally and here at home.

These disasters have completely transformed whole communities sadly causing lives to be lost and the destruction of homes and businesses.

Today, recovery activities continue in Alabama and Missouri, as well as in New Orleans and other Gulf Coast States where the Nation experienced its worst natural disaster over 5 years ago.

As the emergency managers in Florida know, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has predicted another active hurricane season.

In addition to natural disasters, homegrown and foreign terrorists are still committed to attacking the homeland in small and large cities across the country.

The terrorist threat is at its highest level since 9/11 according to the Department of Homeland Security.

The demise of Osama bin Laden does not provide an opportunity for us to rest and limit our preparedness.

In fact, it requires that we reaffirm our commitment to preparedness, especially given terrorists' intent to expand their targets to include smaller cities, ports, and various modes of transportation.

CUTTING GRANT FUNDING IS DANGEROUS

As I said last week on the floor of the House of Representatives, given the numerous threats we face, this is not the time to cut back on homeland security.

The resources provided to State and local first responders are essential and ensure they have the equipment, staffing levels, and training needed to effectively respond.

Unfortunately, some of my colleagues in Congress have questioned the usefulness of these grant funds.

We can all agree that the Nation must pursue responsible fiscal policies, but we should not shortchange the Nation's preparedness.

The fiscal year 2012 Homeland Security budget passed last week makes dramatic and devastating cuts to preparedness grants.

Grant programs such as the Urban Area Security Initiative provide cities such as Detroit and the Tampa area with funds to safeguard against terrorist attack and plan for a host of catastrophic incidents.

Last week, I was able to be a part of a group of legislators to amend the flawed budget to ensure that Detroit and Tampa weren't arbitrarily removed from the list of cities eligible for UASI funding.

The erosion of State and local preparedness funding leaves us at risk of not being adequately prepared to respond to man-made and natural disasters.

CONCLUSION AND THANKS

I look forward to hearing from the panel about what specific effects Federal cuts to funding will have on State and local response capabilities.

Your insight will help inform Congress and hopefully reverse the recent trend of cutting homeland security grant programs.

Additionally, I would like for you to provide an assessment of FEMA's progress since Hurricane Katrina and how the Federal Government can better partner with State and local emergency officials.

Finally, I would like to hear how non-governmental organizations are working to fill the gaps in disaster preparedness and response and what support is needed to ensure all needs are met efficiently.

Again, I thank you all for being here today and I look forward to your testimony.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you. Thank you very much, I appreciate that. It is true we work together to solve a lot of problems. Even though Hansen is only a freshman, he has taken a lead on a lot of these issues and we have been working together to build a consensus, which is the way it should be. We will continue to work together for the best interests of our country.

Thank you.

We are pleased to have a very distinguished panel of witnesses before us today on this very important topic. Our first witness is Mr. Bryan Koon. Mr. Koon is the director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management. Prior to assuming this position, Mr. Koon was Director of Emergency Management at Wal-Mart. He has previously served in the United States Navy as a White House military officer. Mr. Koon has a BS of natural resources from Cornell University and an MBA and graduate certificate in emergency and crisis management from George Washington University.

Our next witness is Ms. Nancy Dragani. Ms. Dragani has served as director of the State of Ohio Emergency Management Agency since January 2005. Ms. Dragani serves on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's National Advisory Council, the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism Advisory Board and is the past president of the National Emergency Management Association. Ms. Dragani retired from the United States Army with 22 years of combined U.S. Army, Army National Guard and Air National Guard service. She holds a BA from Ohio Dominican College. Ms. Dragani is testifying on behalf of the National Emergency Management Association today. Welcome.

Following Ms. Dragani we will hear from Mr. Gerald Smith. Mr. Gerald Smith is the Director of the Lake County Emergency Management Division, a position he has held since December 2004. He is currently the president of the Florida Emergency Preparedness Association. Mr. Smith has also served more than 27 years in the U.S. Air Force with assignments on active duty and in the reserves. He currently holds a rank of Senior Master Sergeant and serves as a First Sergeant. Mr. Smith holds a Bachelor's degree in organizational management from Warner Southern College.

Our next witness will be John "Rusty" Russell. He has been the director of the Huntsville, Alabama, Madison County Emergency Operations Center since December 2001. He has previously served in several positions with the county relating to emergency preparedness. Mr. Russell has previously served as the president of the Alabama Association of Emergency Managers and the president of the Southeastern Region of the International Association of Emergency Managers. Mr. Russell retired from the U.S. Army in 1996 with 22 years of service in missile systems, operations, and Army Materiel Command. Mr. Russell is testifying on behalf of the International Association of Emergency Managers.

Mr. Russell's area was heavily impacted, as you know, by the April tornadoes. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with you and your fellow Madison County residents and all the residents of Alabama as they work to recover and rebuild.

Our next witness is Ms. Chauncia Willis. Ms. Willis is the Emergency Coordinator for the City of Tampa's Office of Emergency Management. She has previously served in emergency management

roles for the State of Georgia and the Atlanta-Fulton County Emergency Management Office as well as various positions in the private sector. Ms. Willis has a Bachelor's degree in psychology from Loyola University in New Orleans, and a Masters of public administration from Georgia State University.

Finally, we will receive testimony from Ms. Linda Carbone. Ms. Carbone serves as the chief executive officer of the Tampa Bay Chapter of the American Red Cross. In this capacity, she is responsible for ensuring Red Cross services are provided to Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Pasco Counties. Ms. Carbone also serves as the regional Red Cross executive for the chapters of Manatee County, Southwest Florida and Charlotte County. Ms. Carbone is a graduate of Boston College.

Again, welcome to all of our witnesses. Your entire written testimony, your statements, will appear in the record. I ask that you summarize your testimony for approximately 5 minutes.

Mr. Koon, you are now recognized to testify. Thank you again.

STATEMENT OF BRYAN W. KOON, DIRECTOR, FLORIDA DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Mr. KOON. Thank you, Chairman. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member and distinguished Members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Bryan Koon, I am the Director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management.

The Division of Emergency Management is Florida's lead disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation agency. Under the direction of the Executive Office of the Governor, the agency oversees the State's efforts to ensure Florida is prepared to respond to any emergency situation. We are not, however, alone in this effort.

We are part of the State Emergency Response Team, which is comprised of our local emergency management agencies at both the county and city level; other State agencies, most notably including the Department of Health, the Department of Transportation and the Florida National Guard; our Federal partners at FEMA and DHS; non-Governmental organizations such as Red Cross, Salvation Army, and Volunteer Florida; and importantly our private sector partners through Florida and the United States.

While Florida has not had a land-falling hurricane in the last few seasons, we have had the opportunity to remain active and respond to multiple events throughout the State, including the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, the Haiti earthquake, numerous floods, wildfires, and tornadoes in the State of Florida, as well as sending individuals to assist in flood and tornado efforts in other States around the country. We also conduct numerous and frequent exercises to ensure that our people remain well-trained and ready to respond to any emergency.

We have numerous issues of importance to discuss today. The first of them is the Emergency Management Preparedness and Assistance Trust Fund. Florida is fortunate to have a strong and successful emergency management program. This is in part due to the Emergency Management Preparedness and Assistance Trust Fund, which is funded in the State of Florida by a surcharge on insurance

policies. This fund allows counties to fund dedicated local programs which maintain standards of performance, particularly in smaller counties throughout the State which rely upon the EMPA fund to fund the majority of their programs.

We also use the Emergency Management Performance Grant Program. This is used by county programs to sustain operational costs related to program staffing, emergency operation center and public shelter readiness, communication and notification systems, emergency planning, training and exercise projects and public information and education programs. It is important that FEMA and DHS maintain EMPG as a direct emergency management all-hazards funding source and that it is not combined with other homeland security-specific grant programs. EMPG funding levels are critical support for State and local programs and we encourage the funding levels to be sustained.

We also encourage Congress to continue funding of the State Homeland Security Grant Program. This program is critical to the State's security readiness and funds programs in our fire, law enforcement, Department of Education, and emergency management community.

With regards to the functional needs, support services and ADA requirements for sheltering, we are in full support of individual rights for access and absolutely opposed to any form of discrimination. Vulnerable populations have been and are an active part of our planning and we at the State are working diligently to find a way to implement the guidance in conjunction with our local emergency management partners.

DEM supports FEMA's new system of Personal Localized Alerting Network, the PLAN system, which will allow us to reach citizens based on their location and a cell tower. This is particularly important in that it will allow us to reach the numerous tourists and travelers that are in Florida on any given day. We look forward to receiving additional details on the program and working with FEMA in its implementation and learn how it will integrate with the National Weather Service's watch and warning system.

Finally, with regard to disaster housing, we encourage the broadest complement of disaster housing options to be considered post-event, with a primary focus being on existing housing stock in the impacted region.

This concludes my remarks.

[The statement of Mr. Koon follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BRYAN W. KOON

JUNE 10, 2011

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Richardson, and distinguished Members of the committee thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak before you today. The Division of Emergency Management ("the Division") is Florida's lead disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation agency. Under the direction of the Executive Office of the Governor, the agency oversees the State's efforts to ensure Florida is prepared to respond to an emergency situation. The Division's primary mission is to maintain the operational readiness of Florida's emergency management systems, and to support disaster response efforts at the county and municipal level. The Division further facilitates the delivery of all Federal domestic security grants

from the Department of Homeland Security and disaster recovery aid from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

During emergency situations, the Governor may activate the State Emergency Response Team ("the SERT"); Florida's unified command body for emergency events. The SERT ensures communication with local authorities, coordinates State response efforts, and facilitates Federal disaster recovery funding for individuals and governments. The SERT is comprised of representatives from State agencies, Cabinet-level departments, the Florida National Guard, including a full-time National Guard Liaison housed within DEM, and non-profit organizations. The Governor serves as the head of the SERT, and is responsible for appointing the State Coordinating Officer to oversee emergency response activities. Division personnel, individual State agencies and Cabinet-level departments staff the State Emergency Operations Center with support personnel to assist with the overall response efforts. During emergency events, the Governor typically designates the Director of the Division as the State Coordinating Officer. The State Coordinating Officer is the Governor's senior disaster advisor, and leads the SERT during State Emergency Operations Center activations. Per the Federal Stafford Act, Florida Statutes (Chapter 252), and Gubernatorial Executive Order, the State Coordinating Officer is granted authorities to ensure the safety of Floridians during disasters. With the Governor's approval and emergency authority, the State Coordinating Officer can order the full mobilization of the State's resources, including deploying personnel, expending funds from the Budget Stabilization Fund for response activities, directing the Florida National Guard, and opening evacuation routes. The State Coordinating Officer's role also includes ensuring the successful coordination of response efforts between Federal, State, county, and municipal governments. After disasters, the Director also fills the role as the Governor's Authorized Representative for the receipt of Federal disaster reimbursement funds.

The foremost operational tenet of the SERT is that all disasters are local. Except when formally requested by county and municipal governments, the State serves only to coordinate State and Federal resources with affected local partners. Though the SERT provides necessary logistical, planning, operational, and financial support, elected and appointed county and municipal officials maintain complete operational control of their jurisdictions. The SERT conducts practice exercises throughout the year to train for events, as preparation for potential emergencies is crucial to the success of future response missions.

Since the devastating 2004–2005 hurricane seasons, which saw seven hurricanes and two tropical storms make landfall in Florida, the SERT has responded to numerous major disasters. These Federally-declared disasters range from tropical storms, flooding events, wildfires, and tornadoes. Most recently, the SERT assisted the Federal response to the catastrophic earthquake in Haiti and the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The potential natural and man-induced dangers to Florida are ever-present, and require the entire State's emergency management team to maintain continuous operational readiness.

I was appointed to serve as the Director of the Division in February 2011. Prior to this appointment, I served as the lead emergency manager of Walmart, a position that allowed me to help coordinate the company's response efforts to several disasters. I also previously served in the United States Navy as a Watch Officer in the White House Situation Room. In this capacity, I developed continuity of operations and continuity of government plans for Federal Government agencies.

OVERVIEW OF THE DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Like the phases of the emergency management cycle (preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation), the Division is divided into four bureaus: The Bureau of Preparedness, the Bureau of Response, the Bureau of Recovery, and the Bureau of Mitigation. There is also the Office of the Director, which administratively houses key senior staff and the Office of Policy and Financial Management. Division employees manage the State Watch Office, the 24-hour notification point for all Statewide emergency, hazardous materials, and severe weather reports.

Recent action by the Florida Legislature incorporated the Division into the Executive Office of the Governor. By law, the Governor is the final authority on all important disaster response decisions. Florida's Governor has the additional statutory and constitutional power to declare states of emergency and formally request assistance from the Federal Government.

Office of the Director

The Director oversees the State's disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation activities. These responsibilities include coordinating efforts with the Federal Government, other State agencies, county and municipal governments, and

private organizations that have a role in emergency management. The Director oversees the Division's extensive work with the private sector to prepare Floridians for emergencies and to respond to disaster situations. The Director also serves as the co-chair of the State Emergency Response Commission and the co-chair of the Domestic Security Oversight Council. As the State Administrative Agent, the Director reviews and approves all of Florida's applications for Department of Homeland Security Grants. After receipt of the grants, the Director also oversees the obligation of funds to State and local units of government.

Office of Policy and Financial Management

The Office of Policy and Financial Management oversees the agency's daily fiscal operations, including: Division-wide operating budgets, travel expenses, and State and Federal grants. The Division's budget is primarily funded by Federal grants, of which approximately 95% passes through to local entities. Federal funds received as a result of open disaster declarations through the Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation Grant Programs, in addition to domestic preparedness funding, non-disaster mitigation grant funding and emergency management performance and interoperable communications grant funding account for over 90 percent of the Division's budget. Excluding funding directly related to Federally-declared disasters and the requisite State match, which represents almost 90 percent of the fiscal year 2010–2011 appropriations, the remaining State dollars in the Division's budget are derived from surcharges on residential and commercial insurance policies in the State, fees received from Florida facilities which use or store hazardous materials in the State, funds provided from Florida's nuclear power companies, and an annual Hurricane Catastrophe Fund (CAT Fund) allocation for statutorily-directed hurricane loss mitigation activities. The Division is appropriated no General Revenue. A large portion of the Division's State funding, and all recurring dollars, are dedicated as match for Federal awards.

The Division's Domestic Preparedness section is responsible for all Department of Homeland Security grant programs in Florida. Since 2001, Florida has received over $1.4 billion from the Federal Government to enhance the State's domestic security and preparedness capabilities to prepare for, prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from terrorist events and other disasters. In addition to disbursing funds designated for Florida's domestic preparedness, the Section monitors all programs and agencies that receive Department of Homeland Security funding. The Section also ensures that Florida is compliant with the National Incident Management System.

Bureau of Preparedness

The Bureau of Preparedness oversees a variety of functions within the Division, including: Hazardous materials and nuclear facility oversight, Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act implementation, State Continuity of Operations and Continuity of Government planning, the updating of the State's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, and the review and certification of county Comprehensive Emergency Management Plans. The Bureau also coordinates the training, exercises, and support to county emergency management agencies in preparing to respond to disasters.

The Technological Hazards Section serves as staff support to the State Emergency Response Commission, which administers the Federal Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act, Florida Hazardous Materials Emergency Response and Community Right-To-Know Act, and the Florida Accidental Release Prevention and Risk Management Planning Act. The Section also works to reduce and prevent accidental chemical releases, limit the severity and consequences of chemical releases, and improve the coordination, communication, and emergency response capabilities between regulated facilities and local emergency preparedness and response agencies. The Section has the further responsibility to prepare for and respond to any event at one of Florida's three nuclear power facilities and the nuclear facility in Alabama on the State border.

Florida is home to five commercial nuclear reactors located at three sites. Two additional reactors are located in Alabama near the State line. The Division has the overall responsibility for coordination of the response to a nuclear power plant emergency. The Division also ensures that communities near nuclear power plants are prepared for an emergency, performing annual exercises that are conducted and designed to test each response organization's response capabilities. In addition, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the FEMA conduct evaluated exercises for each nuclear plant every 2 years. These evaluated exercises measure a response organization's efforts against an established list of criteria designed to ensure key response actions are met.

The Natural Hazards Unit spearheads the updating and revision efforts of the State's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. In addition, the Unit is responsible for reviewing and certifying the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plans for all 67 counties, an action mandated by statute. During the review process, the Unit ensures that each county has policy initiatives compliant with all regulations and directives and, if not, assists the appropriate local personnel in ensuring their Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan is up to standard. The Unit is also responsible for Continuity of Operations Planning and Continuity of Government Planning for the Division and for reviewing and approving similar policies of State agencies. The unit also ensures that State-wide evacuation studies and data are accurate and up-to-date.

The Bureau of Preparedness also oversees and delivers the State-wide training and exercise program. The Training Unit coordinates the delivery of courses in the field for primarily county and municipal responders. The Exercise Unit serves the training needs of Division staff and members of the State Emergency Response Team (SERT) which includes representatives of the State agencies and other organizations that staff the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC). It also maintains and coordinates the State Training and Exercise Planning Plan to coordinate efforts locally, regionally, and at the State level.

Bureau of Response

The Bureau of Response provides swift, effective response during an emergency or catastrophic incident. During SERT activations, the Bureau is responsible for assisting the Governor, the State Coordinating Officer, and the Federal Coordinating Officer lead Florida's complex interagency response effort. There are four sections within the Bureau: The Operations Section which contains the State Watch Office and the Meteorological Support Unit, the Logistics section, the Infrastructure Section, and the Regional Coordination Section.

The State Watch Office is the 24-hour notification point for all emergencies, hazardous materials, and severe weather reports that impact or occur within the State. It also serves as the initial point of contact for county agencies requesting State assistance for situations beyond their response capabilities. The primary mission of the State Watch Office is to provide warning to the appropriate individuals, local governments, and State agencies of impending danger or existing hazardous situations. The State Watch Office provides notifications and warnings to county dispatch centers, other State agencies, nuclear power plants, and Federal agencies regarding emergency situations and the relaying of official requests for outside assistance. The State Watch Office also coordinates with the National Response Center for petroleum-related incidents, per Federal Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act legislation and State regulations. The State Watch Office monitors open-source media (e.g. cable news networks, on-line publications, local newspapers) for any breaking news and incidents. The State Watch Office was recently renovated to enhance the Division's ability to respond to emergency events. Additional technological upgrades expanded the communications capabilities of the SERT, allowing interoperable communications between State, Federal, county, and municipal emergency management and first-responder agencies. Also within the Operations Section, the State Meteorological Support Unit serves as liaisons between the Emergency Management community and atmospheric and physical science organizations to ensure that the Division and State Emergency Response Team has the weather data needed to make decisions and carry out missions. The Meteorology Unit provides a daily weather hazard threat analysis, briefing products, and coordinates training and outreach activities to promote hazardous weather awareness and safety.

The Division established the Regional Coordination Section to ensure the timely presence of State personnel during emergency events outside of the Tallahassee area. The Regional Coordinators serve as the Division's liaisons to county and municipal governments for all phases of emergency management. Each Regional Coordinator lives and works in his or her respective region. There are seven total regions in the State, and the close proximity of Division staff to potentially affected communities provides a faster response time for the State to serve local requests for assistance during disasters. Regional Coordinators often guide field operations for response and recovery efforts and execute capability assessments of local emergency management programs.

The Logistics Section facilitates the State-wide management of resources designated for disaster response and recovery. Florida's Unified Logistics system has been acclaimed as one the Nation's best practices in State Logistics Management. The State maintains 200,000 square feet of emergency resources at the State Logistics Response Center in Central Florida amounting to over 980 semi-trailer loads

of commodities and equipment for immediate response within 6 hours anywhere in the State. More importantly, the State maintains a State Resource Management System for total asset visibility on all resources ordered, shipped, received, cross-docked, and returned through near real-time satellite technology and a transportation management network managed by the State Movement Coordination Center. The Logistics Section also oversees the State-wide Communications Interoperability Program comprised of various State and local interoperable communications platforms and systems that can be deployed to address unique emergency communications missions.

Bureau of Recovery

The Infrastructure Section staffs the Infrastructure Branch during activation of the State Emergency Operations Center. The Infrastructure Branch assists State and local government agencies and SERT private sector partners with access to State and special district agency transportation and public works response assets, telecommunications response assets and industry contacts, electric and natural gas industry response assets and contacts, and fuel industry response assets and contacts.

The effects of natural and man-induced disasters can cripple a community's socioeconomic infrastructure. The Bureau of Recovery contributes to county and municipal efforts to rebuild communities through State and Federal grants. The Bureau is responsible for the management and administration of the Stafford Act relief programs. The Public Assistance ("PA") Program provides Federal assistance on a cost-sharing basis to eligible State Agencies, local government applicants, Indian Tribal governments, and certain private non-profit organizations which suffer damages or costs for: (1) Debris removal; (2) emergency protective measures; and (3) permanent restoration of damaged public infrastructure. The Bureau coordinates with local, State, and Federal agencies to inform residents and businesses of disaster-recovery programs that are available for assistance to recover after a disaster.

The Individual Assistance Section is Florida's first line of recovery assistance to affected individuals and families after a disaster. After performing preliminary damage assessments, the Section assists Florida's residents to understand and apply for State and Federal disaster-related assistance through the activation of Essential Service Centers, Disaster Recovery Centers and the Community Response Program. During a catastrophic event, the Section coordinates and supports direct housing missions through the Disaster Housing Program, which provides travel trailers or mobile homes to survivors when other housing sources are unavailable. The Individual Assistance Section assists survivors with unmet needs in the disaster assistance process by providing information and referrals to the appropriate disaster assistance resources and following through with cases to ensure critical needs are met.

The Florida Recovery Office is a long-term recovery office in Lake Mary, Florida that is jointly administered by the Division and the FEMA, which created the facility after eight named storms made landfall in Florida during the 2004 and 2005 hurricane season. These events caused billions of dollars in damage throughout the State and required extensive Federal and State recovery assistance. As a result of the unprecedented impacts, Federal and State emergency management officials established a separate office located in Central Florida to coordinate Damage Assessment Teams on-site and to disburse Federal assistance grants, and conduct project closeouts for affected residents, county, and municipal governments.

Bureau of Mitigation

The Bureau of Mitigation strives to fortify Florida's infrastructure against the effects of future disaster through proactive structural enhancement and policy initiatives. The Bureau works with county and municipal governments, non-profit organizations, other State agencies, and individuals throughout the State to enhance Florida's resistance to disasters. As a result of such proactive efforts, the Division is compliant with all Federal regulations regarding mitigation planning and procedures and has even received the Federal Government's highest mitigation designation for planning. This "Enhanced" recognition permits the State to receive additional post-disaster funds (20% rather than 15%) for mitigation activities. All of Florida's 67 counties have State and FEMA-approved Local Mitigation Strategies, a necessary requirement to receive Federal Hazard Mitigation Grant Program and Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program funding.

The Federal Hazard Mitigation Grant Program provides funding for the efforts of State, local, and Tribal governments, and non-profit organizations to implement long-term hazard mitigation measures following Presidentially-declared disasters. The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program can fund measures that protect public and

private property by breaking the cycle of damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage caused by repairing and reconstructing property to pre-disaster conditions.

The State implements the National Flood Insurance Program. The Program is a voluntary Federal program that pools the country's flooding risk to provide Americans with comprehensive flood insurance. In Florida, there are approximately 2.1 million National Flood Insurance Program policyholders, a figure representing 38% of all policies Nation-wide. So many homes and businesses are National Flood Insurance Program-insured in Florida because of the State's unique geographic and demographic circumstances, as over 80 percent of the State's 18 million residents live or conduct business near the coastline. Moreover, the State's flat agricultural lands and inland populations are primarily located near rivers and floodplains that have historically flooded after moderate-to-severe rainfall. To qualify for the National Flood Insurance Program, communities must adopt, implement, and enforce FEMA-approved regulations for floodplain construction and development.

RECENT INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

Adoption of Social Media Accounts

To help keep Florida's residents and visitors up-to-date on disaster-related operations, DEM provides a variety of information through several social media accounts, including three Twitter accounts and a Facebook page. The Division's three twitter accounts offer users different perspectives on important emergency management-related topics. DEM's main account, @FLSERT, gives general program and emergency information, news releases, interesting facts, videos, and photos of current events; @FLSERTWeather retransmits significant severe weather alerts and statements issued by the National Weather Service and the National Hurricane Center that are specific to Florida, as well as links to weather-related press releases and Florida hazardous weather awareness information; @FLStateWatch provides a daily feed of breaking news and alerts from the Florida State Watch Office Operations Team for all 67 Florida counties. Facebook, another popular social media forum, provides users with another option to readily access disaster information in a manner that suits them.

Development of State Logistics Response Center

In 2007, the Division established the State Logistics Response Center in Orlando, Florida. The facility is home to the State/Federal Unified Logistics Section, which represents the union of State, Federal, voluntary agencies, and contract vendors that mobilize during declared emergencies to facilitate the acquisition, management, and distribution of Florida's disaster logistics resources. The 200,000 square foot warehouse, complete with the latest tracking software and communications technology, is among the largest State disaster resource facilities in the Nation. The facility maintains sufficient resources to support over 500,000 disaster-affected people for the first 3 days after a catastrophic incident and is capable of distributing these items quickly and efficiently. Most supplies stored at the State Logistics Response Center cost nothing to taxpayers until they are deployed by the SERT, since commodities are maintained under vendor-managed inventory contracts with private entities.

The State Logistics Response Center is strategically located in Central Florida to minimize the average response time throughout the State. The State Logistics Response Center is adjacent to major interstates and highways, reducing the possibility that debris or other obstacles might inhibit semi-trucks from arriving at the supply depot. The cache is also highly storm-resistant and located outside of all documented flood zones and storm surge areas.

State Disability Coordinator

The State Disability Coordinator works with Florida's county-level emergency management offices, the American Red Cross and other shelter management groups to ensure that each county has accessible special-needs and general population shelters. The Disability Coordinator also helps persons with disabilities develop evacuation plans prior to a declared emergency. The Disability Coordinator maintains a constant dialogue with Division policy makers, which ensures that any new directive or program suitably takes into account the unique position of members of the disabled community during emergencies. The Full-Time Equivalent position is provided by the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, funded through a Federal grant allocated by the Florida Department of Health, and housed in the Division. The Disability Coordinator also works with the FEMA's Disability Coordinator and the FEMA Administrator's Senior Advisor on Disabilities to harmonize Federal and State information and resources regarding persons with special needs and persons with disabilities during emergencies.

Private Sector Coordination

After the 2004–2005 hurricane seasons, the Division recognized that Florida needed to further incorporate the private sector into the State's strategic disaster response planning. To accomplish this goal, the Division created Emergency Support Function 18: Business, Industry and Economic Stabilization (ESF 18). ESF 18 has the lead responsibility to coordinate local, State, and Federal agency actions that provide immediate and short-term assistance to businesses and industries affected by a disaster. Such assistance may include providing access to the financial, workforce, technical, and community resources that may affect a community's ability to restore business operations and resume focus on long-term business strategies. The Division also hired a private sector coordinator to assist Florida's business community ensure that they are prepared for a disaster response. This work is critical, since 40% off all small businesses that close during a disaster never resume business operations.

CONCLUSION

Natural disasters are certain and often anticipated. Every State must be able to plan for disasters as well as build and sustain the capability to respond. EMPG is the backbone of the Nation's all-hazards emergency management system and the only source of direct Federal funding to State and local governments for emergency management capacity building. EMPG is used for personnel, planning, training, and exercises at both the State and local levels. EMPG is primarily used to support State and local emergency management personnel who are responsible for writing plans; conducting training, exercises and corrective action; educating the public on disaster readiness; and maintaining the Nation's emergency response system. EMPG is being used to help States create and update plans for receiving and distribution plans for emergency supplies such as water, ice, and food after a disaster; debris removal plans; and plans for receiving or evacuating people—all of these critical issues identified in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and in the recent outbreak of tornados and flooding across the south and Midwest.

EMPG is the only all-hazards preparedness program within the Department of Homeland Security that requires a match at the State and local level. The match is evidence of the commitment by State and local governments to address the urgent need for all-hazards emergency planning. Because of this commitment at the State and local level it is vital to the mission of DEM and our local partners that this funding remain intact and funding levels be maintained or increased.

The Division is prepared to respond to any disaster that affects Florida. As the hurricane capital of the United States and being susceptible to several types of other disasters, the importance of strong State and local emergency management systems is critical. The Division will continue to work with Federal, State, local, and private-sector partners to ensure that Florida's emergency management systems remain among the best in the Nation.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you very much for your testimony.

Now I would like to ask Ms. Dragani to testify. You are recognized for 5 minutes or so.

STATEMENT OF NANCY DRAGANI, CHAIR, RESPONSE AND RECOVERY COMMITTEE, NATIONAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

Ms. DRAGANI. Thank you. Good morning, Chairman Bilirakis and Representative Clarke; thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the National Emergency Management Association. Because I am testifying on behalf of NEMA, my remarks will address a National perspective on achievements and accomplishments.

I submitted a full statement for the record, so I will be brief in my comments this morning. In putting together the testimony, it was interesting to have an opportunity to step back from day-to-day emergency management and look back at what we have done over the last several years.

As I looked back on the past 6 years, it is amazing to see how far we have come as an organization and as a profession since Hur-

ricanes Katrina and Rita as well as the major changes that have been driven by the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act. In addition to the National improvements in planning, exercise training, and equipment, other significant changes have been influenced through the evolving technologies that have impacted not only our profession but our society at large.

One of the key lessons of 2005 was that the relationship with our private sector partners must be improved. We learned that a successful cooperative relationship means an integrated relationship. An example of where this transformation is happening can be seen in Louisiana. The Louisiana Business Emergency Operations Center is a stand-alone facility that works hand-in-hand with the State operations center. This relationship allows State officials access to real-time information from their private sector partners who have available assets and it helps coordinate with our non-Governmental partners like the volunteer organizations after a disaster. The private sector in turn, and it is an integrated cooperative relationship, has better access to State and local response, allowing them to get their businesses up and running faster, which ultimately helps the community recover faster. Louisiana's Business EOC has been so effective that many States, mine included, are looking at it as a model for our own business integration operations.

Another award-winning innovation is the Virginia Inter-Operability Picture for Emergency Response, or VIPER. This computer-based tool allows Virginia the opportunity to visually assess the State-wide emergency management operations, again, in real time. It also offers instant access to essential local information using those traditional geographic information system, or GIS layers.

VIPER can monitor traffic patterns, provide data about local pieces of critical infrastructure and track environmental sensors. All of this information is then analyzed by the tool and fed back to the Virginia Department of Emergency Management so that they can make the best, most effective decisions on behalf of their State and local response partners.

VIPER is another example of a best practice being used by other States. The program is currently in use throughout agencies in 7 different States and localities and has won awards from the Council of State Government and Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

No discussion regarding technology and public outreach in the past 6 years would be productive or complete without discussion of social media. Consider that in 2005 Facebook and YouTube had been around for about 3 months, and no one would know what Twitter meant for another year. I would suggest that some people still don't know what Twitter means.

[Laughter.]

Ms. DRAGANI. Myself included, of course.

Times have certainly changed and the use of social media, especially in emergency management, continues to an organic, evolving process.

Smartphones have put the power of social media in the pockets and hands of our citizens we are serving, allowing them to now be active partners in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

Within the emergency management and homeland security community, social media has been met with various amounts of support and opinions. But even though some may not fully understand how to use the tool, nearly every State emergency management now has a presence on Twitter and almost half have a presence on Facebook. Even FEMA has numerous social media accounts.

During the recent storms in Alabama and Missouri, FEMA relied on on-line databases to track the status of missing people, and in partnership with State and local government, used social media to push out vital recovery information to their citizens.

Technology in social media constantly changes and we in the emergency management community must continue to change along with it so that we can effectively harness the power of social media.

Mutual aid and technology and State resources can only go so far. Sometimes we need physical help from our partners. Mutual aid, specifically through the Emergency Management Systems Compact, or EMAC, has evolved into one of the best supporting mechanisms for State and local emergency managers to obtain assistance throughout the Nation.

EMAC has been around since 1996, but a mainstay of emergency management since about 1994. For example, on September 11, 2001, 26 emergency management personnel responded to the impacted areas through EMAC. Just 4 years later, EMAC provided 66,000 people for responses to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. EMAC provided another 12,000 people in Hurricanes Gustav and Ike. So a comparison—2001, 26 people; 2004, 66,000 people.

The quality and sustainability of EMAC continues to grow as the compact evolves to meet our needs. It stands as an example of a program that well serves our communities, our States, and our Nation.

Of course, the examples I outlined here are really just the tip of the iceberg. My statement for the record goes into far more detail on numerous other efforts, including state-of-the-art alert and warning systems, improved exercise programs, and other programs. These efforts touch every State across the country.

One of the most valuable lessons we have learned in the last 6 years is that each of the States has the opportunity to act as a test lab for technology and programs from which other States can learn. We help each other daily so that when a disaster does occur, we can work together to save lives and protect property.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before this field hearing and I look forward to taking any questions you may have.

[The statement of Ms. Dragani follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF NANCY DRAGANI

JUNE 10, 2011

INTRODUCTION

Thank you Chairman Bilirakis, Ranking Member Richardson, and distinguished Members of the subcommittee for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA). Reflection on the events of the past 6 years, since some of the most significant natural disasters of our time, allows us to learn from the past and properly assess where we currently stand as a Nation and a profession. As disasters continue to challenge our Nation's emergency managers, we seldom have time to look back and reflect on how far we have come.

Many of the most significant changes in emergency management have been influenced through evolving technology and its impact on our society. In the past 6 years, we have witnessed better integration of the private sector in emergency management preparedness, response, and recovery. Improved technologies and more effective use of social media impacts every aspect of public engagement. Exercise programs and public warning and communications systems continue to evolve to meet ever-changing threats.

PRIVATE SECTOR INTEGRATION

Working with the private sector has always been a priority in emergency management, but after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, we realized improvements could be made and "cooperation" must become "integration." An example of this integration comes from Louisiana which is bringing the private sector closer to the center of the entire decision-making process.

Through a Cooperative Endeavour Agreement, Louisiana used EMPG funds to begin developing the Louisiana Business Emergency Operations Center (LABEOC). A stand-alone facility, the LABEOC is interconnected with the State EOC in Baton Rouge. It is designed to improve disaster preparedness and response by:

(1) Improving communications to and from business and industry before, during, and after a disaster,

(2) Utilizing a business model when more efficient and cost-effective to respond to resource and other requests; and

(3) Leveraging the critical infrastructure representatives in the LABEOC to help bring communities back on-line while receiving real-time economic impact information important in determining level of State and Federal assistance.

The LABEOC also facilitates better communication and coordination with the private sector and the requests and needs of nonprofits through National and State Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD). This model has gained the attention of DHS and neighboring Gulf States, which have expressed interest in establishing Business Emergency Operations Centers within their own States.

ALERT AND WARNING SYSTEMS

The public-private relationship is also linking advances in technology with alert and warning systems. One of the basic lessons learned from Katrina was the need to effectively reach out to the broadest audiences possible during a disaster.

The Washington State Emergency Management Division (WEMD) and its technical contractor, Federal Signal Corporation, developed the All-Hazard Alert Broadcasting (AHAB) siren network to provide State and local officials with the capability to effectively alert the public to any hazardous situation that may arise. While the system is designed to provide timely warning for any hazard, its primary function in the State is to conduct notification to outdoor populations of impending tsunamis. This joint effort between WEMD and Federal Signal represents the power of public-private partnerships to meet the unique needs of public alert and notification requirements for multiple hazards.

To increase the effectiveness and coverage of this key communication network, the AHAB system provides both tone and voice alert capability to State and local emergency management authorities. Social science research indicated citizens often remain unaware of what to do when they hear sirens. To alleviate potential confusion, this system was designed not only to provide an audible alert, but also play prescripted digital directions which give at-risk individuals critical and timely information on how to respond appropriately to the emergency. The system produces 360-degree coverage and has a distinct blue strobe light which provides a visual extension of the warning signal for the hearing-impaired and in areas with high ambient noise.

AHAB sirens are capable of being activated from the State EOC Alert and Warning Center via satellite or from the local emergency management agency using Radio Frequency technology and both activation pathways are tested regularly. This siren network now covers the outer coast and Strait of Juan de Fuca shorelines of Washington State and supplements indoor alert and notification provided through the Emergency Alert System (EAS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration weather radio. The deployment strategy has focused on first installing sirens in population centers and at high-risk or critical facilities. Initial sound studies indicate 96 sirens are necessary for full warning coverage and 50 sirens have been deployed as of May 2011.

Since the creation of this system, AHAB has become the de-facto standard for tsunami alert and notification for outdoor populations. Based on the successful implementation of the AHAB siren network in Washington, similar systems have been

installed in Alaska and Puerto Rico. Pierce County, Washington has also deployed AHAB sirens as part of the volcano warning system for Mount Rainier.

ENHANCING TECHNOLOGY

Technological advancements in the past 6 years go far beyond traditional alert and warning systems. Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) maintains a system marking true innovation through the Virginia Interoperability Picture for Emergency Response, or VIPER.

This tool not only allows the Virginia Emergency Operations Center staff the ability to visually assess State-wide emergency management operations in real time but also automatically offers users instant access to essential local information through traditional Geographic Information Systems layers.

VIPER can work in various emergency scenarios. If a locality experiences a rapidly escalating traffic incident, VIPER will provide information about nearby hospitals; in the case of a hazardous materials spill, VIPER will offer data about area schools; during a flood, VIPER will alert users to low-lying areas which could be affected. VIPER monitors environmental sensors and gathers data from VDEM's crisis management system as well as external systems, such as Computer Aided Dispatch, the National Weather Service and the Integrated Flood Observation and Warning System. VIPER then performs an analysis of all available information and alerts VDEM to potential impacts on critical infrastructure.

VIPER stands as an example of how each of the States can be utilized as unique and distinct test beds of innovation. This has already occurred for VIPER, as several State agencies across the country have begun to incorporate elements of the tool into their operations, including the Florida Division of Emergency Management, Mississippi Fusion Center, North Carolina State Police, the South Carolina Emergency Management Division, Texas Border Control, and local government agencies in Beverly Hills, California; Clarke County, Nevada; and Virginia Beach, Virginia. VIPER also helped DHS, FEMA, the U.S. Secret Service, and VDEM monitor the 56th Presidential Inauguration, and Tampa officials used VIPER to monitor Super Bowl XLIII.

VIPER has received numerous honors, including those from the Council of State Governments and the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government which acknowledges creative Government initiatives around the country.

#SMEM

No discussion regarding technology and public outreach in the past 6 years is complete without acknowledging the vast impacts of social media. While many of the innovations in emergency management stemmed from lessons learned during the response and recovery from Hurricane Katrina, one of the most influential changes evolved naturally and has recently proven to be a critical resource for emergency responders and others in a disaster situation. The onset of the social media wave in our personal lives occurred rapidly. It is often hard to remember that in 2005 Facebook and YouTube could only measure their existence in months while Twitter would not be created until a year after Katrina altered the Gulf Coast forever.

The use of social media in disasters seems like a natural progression. The public uses new media platforms to document their daily activities and express opinions about current events. Smartphones have put the power of social media in to the pockets of citizens we serve, allowing them to be a partner in the disaster preparedness, response, and recovery process. On twitter, hashtags are often used to coordinate discussion. These hashtags help people communicate and discuss issues of importance. Social media in emergency management (or "smem") has become a hashtag utilized by people around the world to engage emergency management stakeholders from various disciplines and has proven to be a vital forum for discussion of the evolution of this emerging technology.

Within the emergency management and homeland security community, the introduction of social media has been met with varied opinions. Skepticism and doubt were natural reactions for some, while many worked from the outset to integrate this new technology into their existing structures. Incredibly, nearly every State Emergency Management agency has a presence on Twitter and half also have a presence on Facebook. FEMA has a number of accounts on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube; and has encouraged partnerships between FEMA and the States. During the Tennessee floods of 2010, FEMA partnered with the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency to encourage information and picture sharing of the response and recovery. Many challenges exist in adoption, but FEMA has encouraged State and

local officials to address challenges or barriers in their own agencies prior to a disaster so social media use is not a burden, but rather another tool in a comprehensive toolbox.

FEMA leadership has been challenging the emergency management community to innovate faster than the speed of government. Instead of trying to make systems fit the traditional emergency management structure, and make the public fit how we communicate now, we must meet the needs for accurate information following a disaster by figuring out how best to engage the public. We continue to experiment with new platforms and technologies and as State emergency managers we work with our own staffs to bring these efforts down to a community level.

During the recent storms in Alabama and Missouri, as well as the flooding in Louisiana, the evolution of a social media workforce has continued. FEMA has come to rely on on-line databases to track the status of missing people, and it now uses digital mapping to allow search-and-rescue teams to deliver resources to areas of highest need. The agency has started to see the emergence of a new group of volunteers from around the world who are able to apply technology in real-time situations to "crowd source," a method of using large numbers of people to work on common problems and share information and solutions. These volunteers cull the internet for open source information and put this into databases or on maps to provide first responders and local officials with a clear picture of an incident without impeding the immediate response work being done on the ground.

Technology continues to evolve and while current social media platforms may seem like they are going to be around forever, we must constantly remain aware of how our citizens communicate. Limited resources on the State and local level make leveraging existing models and platforms key factors in success before, during, and after a disaster. Social media is constantly changing and harnessing the power of this revolution can help the emergency management community be more effective in serving our citizens in their time of need.

MUTUAL AID

Mutual aid, specifically through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), has evolved into one of the best supporting mechanisms for State emergency managers to obtain assistance throughout the country. This assistance occurs rapidly with arrangements pre-determined for reimbursement and deployment.

When States and the U.S. Territories joined together and Congress ratified EMAC (Pub. L. 104–321) in 1996, the legal and procedural mechanism was created whereby emergency response resources such as Urban Search and Rescue Teams can quickly move throughout the country to meet disaster needs. All 50 States, the District of Columbia, and three territories are members of EMAC and have committed their emergency resources in helping neighboring States and territories.

EMAC has grown significantly in size, volume, and the type of resources provided over the years. Since 2004, the volume and types of resources requested under EMAC has grown considerably. For example, 26 emergency management personnel responded to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Conversely, over 66,000 personnel from a variety of disciplines deployed to the Gulf Coast in response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and 12,279 personnel to Texas and Louisiana during Hurricanes Gustav and Ike. The response lasted 63 continuous days with a total of 265 completed missions. The 2009 Spring Flooding in North Dakota and Minnesota resulted in States deploying equipment, sandbags, and 1,029 personnel to North Dakota. In all, 727 National Guard personnel and 302 civilians were sent to assist via the compact.

EXERCISE PROGRAMS

While we must always be ready to harness innovations in emergency management and the society in which we work to protect, strides must be taken to ensure our agencies remain robust from within as well. Such improvements are often ensured through the use of effective exercise and training doctrines which have realized vast improvements in the past decade. More recently, these exercise programs work to involve the public more and become rolling assessments of where we stand operationally.

California's annual State-wide Golden Guardian Exercise Series was first implemented in 2004 and is managed by the California Emergency Management Agency (CalEMA). The purpose of Golden Guardian is to enhance the all-hazards emergency management readiness of regional and State responders, including private sector and volunteer organizations. The goal is to build upon the lessons learned to improve California's ability to prevent, protect, respond, and recover from catastrophic

natural and man-made disasters. Golden Guardian is currently the largest State-wide exercise program of its kind in the country.

But California does not stop with Golden Guardian in assessing the State's level of readiness. The third Thursday of each October, millions of Californians practice how to protect themselves during an earthquake. The Great California ShakeOut begins with the "Drop Cover and Hold On" drill, however, the campaign reaches beyond to inspire Californians to become more earthquake-resilient at work, school, home, and in their communities. ShakeOut began as a southern California regional event in 2008, providing a public participation element to California's Golden Guardian annual exercise. It was the largest earthquake drill in U.S. history at the time with a total of 5.4 million participants. The success of the exercise led to a State-wide event in 2009, with more than 6.9 million participants, and is now annual California event that included nearly 8 million drill participants in 2010.

CONCLUSION

As you can see, the emergency management profession has changed dramatically since 2005 and will continue to do so as the relationships between homeland security and emergency management, public and private sector representatives, and Government officials with the public evolve. By engaging diverse stakeholder groups, the emergency management community will benefit from enhancements and overhauls while leveraging the innovative nature of professionals and community members. Some changes in the community have been reactions to specific disasters, while others developed organically; answering questions many of us never thought to ask. The best way to continue this pattern of innovation is to be confident in past accomplishments and open to future changes that will make the profession more effective, efficient, and ultimately, more meaningful for the citizens that we serve.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you for being here.

Now, I will recognize Mr. Smith for 5 minutes or so.

STATEMENT OF GERALD L. SMITH, PRESIDENT, FLORIDA EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS ASSOCIATION

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman and Congressman Clarke, thank you for having us here today.

As you said, I am the director for Lake County. Lake County is in central Florida, it has approximately 300,000 residents and has 1,100 square miles. I am also the president of the Florida Emergency Preparedness Association, which is the only State-wide emergency management association. I am also here as the president of our association. Unfortunately my county has had two major Presidential declarations since the passing of the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act, so I have a little bit of personal knowledge into the things that have occurred.

As Mr. Koon indicated, Florida has a strong emergency management program. Our position is that strong counties make a strong State. This is done through collaboration with the Florida Division of Emergency Management. We also, as was mentioned, benefit from the Emergency Management Preparedness Assistance Grant Trust Fund and also a strong Florida Statute 252 and Administrative Code 9G, which allows us to work with other agencies and gives the Florida agencies responsibilities that we utilize.

In the past several years, as I mentioned, I have had experience with FEMA from the disaster response, the success that we had there at we believe the first FEMA-supported volunteer camp, which allowed us to rapidly assist our citizens in the recovery process. We have also been involved with catastrophic planning as a host community. That was a planning initiative between FEMA and Florida DEM and brought us I think a lot more preparedness for hurricanes in the State of Florida.

We deeply appreciate the support of the subcommittee by having this hearing here in Florida today. While I understand the focus here is on the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act, we believe that FEMA is complying with a lot of those issues. However, there are some unique local perspectives that we would like to provide.

One of the issues is on the Emergency Management Performance Grant. That is the backbone of emergency management in this country. In Florida, we would have not been as prepared in the 2004, 2005 storms, the H1N1, the Haitian repatriation, which was a massive effort in Florida, and then again the Deepwater Horizon. That grant was significant to our preparedness. That is also matched dollar-for-dollar at the local level.

The issue we have a concern with is on the fiscal year 2012 budget, there is an initiative for a 10 percent holdback from FEMA on that. While it would look like though there is an increase in the EMPG, this would actually be a decrease to the States and local governments.

As far as the State Homeland Security Grant Program, we are very grateful for that program. However, with some of the changes in Congress, it has put the law enforcement into the mix with the other—the prevention issues into the mix with everything else, it has created an unintended competition between prevention and preparedness. So that is one of the issues we would like to discuss.

As far as the coordinating with Federal agencies, during Deepwater Horizon and H1N1 and with the Haitian repatriation, Florida experienced—was exposed to different Federal agencies that we had not routinely dealt with before. They obviously had some lack of knowledge in dealing with the sovereignty of local and State government and our issues. In my written testimony, I have a lot of issues in there, the main theme being that we need to develop local relationships now and also the local teams need to be involved in the decision-making process of policy and resource development.

As far the FNSS with the ADA, one of our frustrations with that is that was done, from our understanding, without local input. The challenge with that is that the local governments have the actual fiduciary responsibility of providing shelter. So we are looking forward to being able to work with the disability advocates, we want to hold a summit, pull them together, educate them on the dynamics of risk sheltering. Hurricane risk sheltering is completely different than any other type of sheltering. So we need to look at the facts where are talking about sheltering from Collier County all the way up to Citrus County on the west coast of Florida or from Volusia County all the way down to Monroe County, which is in the Keys. We are talking three-quarters of the State so we need to explain that issue to them.

We have no desire or have any inclination of depriving anyone of their individual rights; however, we need to make sure that they understand that the law needs to apply and to be understood during different situations that occur during a hurricane.

The other is that the Department of Justice, their settlements are completely inconsistent. That is driving a major issue and a roadblock for Florida to be able to be prepared for that. Also, in Florida, we are watching what legal discussions are going on be-

tween Broward County and DOJ on this issue, and we cannot move completely forward until that is resolved.

As far as the Stafford Act duplication of benefits, one of the issues that we saw during the Groundhog Day tornadoes is that the local government was not allowed to know what individuals received, what level of individual assistance from FEMA. This can create our inability to prevent duplication of services and it also prevents the local elected officials from being able to provide for their constituents.

As has been mentioned about FEMA and the FCC planned program for cell phone usage, we are in full support of that. We also though want to make sure that the NOAA weather radio program is continued to be funded and utilized as it is today.

Recently FEMA also is going through a recoupment process for individual assistance and public assistance. While we recognize there is a need to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse and to prosecute any type of those violations, we also need to understand that during a disaster, typically the administrative processes change and also, the staff that has been applying this administrative process is changed, and that over the years, once an audit has occurred, there is confusion about how the rules were applied at that specific time.

The Florida Emergency Preparedness Association works on a lot of different initiatives. We have a private-public partnership committee and work with Florida DEM on bringing in our private vendor constituents and be able to work some issues there. We have a higher education committee, which we are working to establish what levels of topics that a college would provide for our students. One of the things we are seeing is they are real good on the theory, but the actual practicality is some of the challenges that we are working with our local State colleges.

We also have an instruction recognition program where we establish recognition of instructor credentials within the State. We also provide a certification for our membership, and we are also working to establish an emergency management—well, we have an emergency management academy, but we are working to establish standards and we look forward to working with FEMA on their new emergency management academy, particularly in Florida.

So in closing, we really appreciate the fact of being able to be here today and provide our input into these specific issues. As the Chairman mentioned, while we have not probably gone through all the issues with the Post-Katrina Act, we imagine that this summer we are going to get that opportunity.

Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. Smith follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GERALD L. "JERRY" SMITH, II

JUNE 10, 2011

Chairman Bilirakis, Ranking Member Richardson, and distinguished Members of the subcommittee, I am Jerry Smith, the Director of Emergency Management for Lake County, Florida. I currently serve as the President of the Florida Emergency Preparedness Association, and I am providing this statement on critical local and State Emergency Management issues on behalf of the Association and the numerous agencies and members it represents. I have been a local government emergency manager for nearly 7 years, during which I managed two major Presidential dec-

larations, Tropical Storm Fay in 2008 and the Groundhog Day tornadoes in 2007. Much like the recent horrific experiences of my colleagues across the Nation, my community experienced loss of life, multiple injuries, significant damages and disruption of life as we knew it from an outbreak of multiple tornadoes. It is perhaps this experience that has most shaped my current emergency management career and perspective. In addition to these, there were also numerous other Lake County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) activations. My experience also includes being the State Emergency Response Team Deputy Chief in June, 2010, during the Deepwater Horizon activation in Tallahassee, Florida. Prior to my Emergency Management career, I dedicated 15 years to Emergency Medical Services, and over 27 years with the Air Force, active duty, and reserves. I am currently assigned to the 920th Rescue Wing, Patrick AFB, Florida.

The Florida Emergency Preparedness Association (FEPA) is Florida's only Statewide organization dedicated to serving and enhancing all hazards emergency management activities at all levels. Membership is comprised of representatives from local government emergency management agencies, emergency response disciplines, industrial, commercial, educational, military, private, non-profit, Tribal, and volunteer organizations, and professionals in all career fields who perform emergency management functions.

The primary mission of FEPA is to provide an information and support network among county emergency management directors and partners at the municipal, county, regional, Tribal, State and Federal Government levels. FEPA also ensures coordination and information dissemination to those responsible for emergency preparedness in volunteer and private industry organizations on a host of critical issues.

Florida is fortunate to have a strong and successful Emergency Management program. This is in part due to the Emergency Management, Preparedness, and Assistance (EMPA) Trust Fund which was established by the 1994 Florida Legislature to fund State and local emergency management programs and responsibilities outlined in Chapter 252, Florida Statutes, and Florida Administrative Code 9G.

The EMPA Trust Fund allows counties to fund dedicated local programs which maintain standards of performance. While Florida Statute 252 and Florida Administrative Code 9G outline specific State and local governments' emergency management authorities and responsibilities, we also benefit from numerous other forms of legislation and rules that require all aspects of government in Florida to be engaged in emergency management. Our position is strong counties make a strong State through positive collaboration and coordination with the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM).

Over the past several years I have had several experiences with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), from assisting Lake County during a disaster, to working through various planning processes. During the Groundhog Day tornadoes, FEMA funded and supported the first specifically designated camp for volunteers who came from across the country. Establishing a camp for the volunteers was critical to providing assistance to our impacted citizens and greatly expedited our relief operations.

I have been involved in the catastrophic event planning effort that FEMA provided for the State of Florida, from a "Host Community" perspective. The experience was very useful and it has improved Florida's hurricane preparedness.

After the attacks on 9/11, it was understandable that the focus of the Country would be for terrorism; however, the events which created the need for the Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA) clearly indicated the need for a comprehensive emergency management system across the Nation. I believe FEMA is and has been pursuing this goal and is making positive gains. One of these is the requirement for senior FEMA positions to be filled by qualified, experienced emergency managers. This standard should never be altered.

We deeply appreciate the support this subcommittee provides to Florida's emergency management community, and the opportunity to speak before you today. I recognize that the committee's focus during the hearing today is on the PKEMRA, and I intend to present general testimony associated with that and related topics. It is my assessment that the Federal Emergency Management Agency is complying with the PKEMRA; however, there are some areas that need further collaboration with local emergency management practitioners. My comments are intended to present the local perspective toward that collaboration.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE GRANTS (EMPG)

Florida receives Emergency Management Performance Grant funding from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), FEMA, based on an annual Congressional

appropriation and Federal funding formula. FEPA greatly appreciates the support to maintain the funding levels of EMPG this year, in spite of great pressures to reduce the Federal budget.

EMPG, which has been called "the backbone of the Nation's emergency management system", constitutes the only source of direct Federal funding for State and local governments, to provide basic emergency coordination and planning capabilities for all hazards including those related to homeland security. These funds are used to support and enhance State and local emergency management programs. In Florida, the Division of Emergency Management passes Federal EMPG funds through to county governments to sustain personnel and basic operational expenses. These funds are matched at the local level "dollar for dollar" with non-Federal revenues.

EMPG funding is used by county programs to sustain operational costs related to program staffing, Emergency Operation Center and Public Shelter readiness, critical communications and notification systems, emergency planning, training and exercise projects, and public information and education programs. Together these funds (Federal and non-Federal match) support the "first line of defense" at the local level, for a broad range of hazards and emergencies faced by Florida communities.

As the responsibilities placed on local emergency management programs and personnel continue to expand, Federal EMPG dollars are a critical component of Florida's State-wide emergency management system. Without this on-going Federal funding stream, Florida's emergency management programs would not have been able to develop or maintain the local capacity needed for the extended emergency operations required by the unprecedented 2004 and 2005 Hurricane Seasons or the more recent 2010 Haiti Repatriation, H1N1, and Deepwater Horizon events.

The House Appropriations Subcommittee and Full Committee action on the fiscal year 2012 budget for the Department of Homeland Security allowed the Emergency Management Performance Grant to receive the President's request of $350 million, a $10 million increase over fiscal year 2011. This action is significant in the protection of the local programs. However, the bill increased the Administrative Fee that FEMA can keep for program administration to "not to exceed 10 percent".

If the budget remains at the $350 million level, and if the 10% Administrative Fee language remains, $35 million could be retained by FEMA for Management and Administration. This means only $315,000,000 would be awarded. Although the $350 million level appears to sustain critical support for State and local programs, in practice it would be a decrease of about $14 million from the award amounts in fiscal year 2010 and fiscal year 2011. It has become practice for the funding for FEMA's Grant Program Directorate and other programs to be funded by the Administrative Fee on the grant programs. We respectfully request that this practice be discontinued or the funding level be adjusted to accommodate it without compromising State and local programs.

It is important that FEMA and DHS maintain EMPG as a direct emergency management, all-hazards funding source and it is not combined with other homeland security-specific grant funding. EMPG must maintain its own unique identity. Please remain vigilant in your protection of this funding and its intended purpose.

STATE HOMELAND SECURITY GRANT PROGRAM

The post-9/11 Federal funding provided to Florida under the State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSGP) allowed the State to escalate its preparedness and prevention capabilities and capacities. Florida continues to implement and refine its State Homeland Security Strategy and county emergency management programs are a critical component of the State strategy. For the last several years, under the Congressional appropriation, funding for law enforcement prevention activities has become a subset of the overall SHSGP, rather than a unique grant funding stream. In Florida, this has created an unintended "competition" between preparedness and prevention priorities for scarce SHSGP funds. Florida's emergency managers support the current requirement that the majority of SHSGP funds be made available to local programs and projects.

The recent reductions in the Federal budget that have resulted in reducing Florida's UASI funding will make this competition more intense.

COORDINATION OF FEDERAL RESPONSE TO EMERGENCY EVENTS

Even without a direct hurricane impact, 2010 proved to be an extremely busy year for the State's local emergency management programs. Florida coordinated a massive repatriation effort in response to the devastating earthquake in Haiti. This effort relied on the expertise and experience of county emergency management programs to directly support Federal activities in their jurisdiction. The Deepwater Ho-

rizon explosion and resulting oil spill directly threatened Florida's fragile environment and economy and its impacts continue to affect the State today. Each of these events resulted in extended interaction with Federal agencies and officials, who have limited experience with the emergency authorities and responsibilities of Florida's sovereign State and local governments, and emergency management programs. To be effective during disaster events, Federal agencies and programs and their personnel must become much more engaged in local emergency planning, projects, and procedures before emergency events occur. The relationships between Federal and local agencies need to be developed.

In addition to encouraging more direct interaction and understanding of local conditions, Congress must review the current statutory and regulatory requirements of Federal agencies and entities, to develop and maintain separate emergency response plans and procedures. Florida's emergency managers recognize and value the need for a specialized response capability for specific hazards. However, the overall direction, control, and implementation of emergency protective measures must be designed to recognize and respect local authorities and jurisdictions, and be clearly and consistently communicated across Federal agencies. While the procedures to do so are in the National Response Framework, confusion results when a Principle Federal Official for "incidents of national significance" is appointed, such as in the Deepwater Horizon spill, and a Federal Coordinating Officer is used for Stafford Act events. Our position is all events should follow the Stafford Act model. This will provide consistency and more control at the local level.

Several recurring tenets for coordinated emergency response were made evident during Florida's experience with the Deepwater Horizon incident and the massive repatriation effort in Haiti. I list them here briefly as "Lessons Learned" as Congress considers amendments and revisions to existing laws and regulations.

1. Local governments must retain control of protective action decisions made for their jurisdictions.
2. The responsible party, State, and Federal response officials must respect local government protective action decision making.
3. Local governments must have an "equal" voice in prioritization and allocation of scarce resources.
4. Local government objectives may be very different than Responsible Party or Federal objectives. As an example—capping the well or recovering product vs. protecting the beaches.
5. As I mentioned earlier, the Federal response systems must better align with the processes and systems used for other emergencies and disasters.
6. All incidents should follow the Stafford Act model, which would allow the National Response Framework to eliminate the unnecessary position of Principle Federal Official.

Florida has a rich history of providing support for Federal disaster responses across the Nation, both as a direct asset tasked by Federal authorities and as part of coordinated State-to-State mutual aid. This tradition has the full support of local emergency management programs and personnel and is sure to be continued.

ADA REQUIREMENTS FOR SHELTERS/FNSS (FUNCTIONAL NEEDS SUPPORT SERVICES) DOCUMENT

A major theme throughout the PKEMRA was direction to FEMA to provide for persons with disabilities and other factors. Unfortunately there was not clear direction to include local Emergency Management practitioners in the development of guidelines. The current "Guidance on Planning for the Integration of Functional Needs Support Services in General Population Shelters" was developed predominantly by staff from FEMA, the Department of Justice (DOJ) and disability advocacy groups. None of these agencies are responsible or have experience with shelter operations. While I recognize the American Red Cross (ARC) was involved, they do not have the fiduciary responsibility to shelter like local emergency managers. I acknowledge the efforts of the FDEM Disability Coordinator in contributing to the document. I also respect and find his involvement with the counties extremely beneficial. However, it is important to note the position is funded by another State agency and is not filled by an emergency management practitioner. A saying utilized by the disability advocacy community is "Nothing about us, without us", but it seems they produced a document without local emergency management practitioners. It is interesting that the PKEMRA was passed in 2006, yet the FNSS document was not distributed until October 2010, over 4 years later.

Local emergency managers are in full support of individual rights for access and absolutely opposed to any form of discrimination. A major aspect of our planning for disasters is to identify and protect vulnerable populations. This is why we are

so frustrated that FEMA did not follow the standard practice of asking for local comments before issuing the FNSS document. There is also mass confusion on the authority of the document. FEMA staff state that it is a guidance document, but also state that DOJ may use it as a compliance document. When FEMA staff were asked to intervene with DOJ for clarification, the request was rejected.

Florida is working diligently to find a way to implement the guidance, but there is inconsistency in the Department of Justice settlements. Current examples of conflicting settlements are City of Fort Myers, FL, Fairfax County, VA, Town of Swansea, MA, and the City of Los Angeles, CA. FEPA is most concerned with the ongoing legal actions in Broward County, Florida which until resolved we will not have clear direction and cannot move forward significantly until the findings are released.

Recent DOJ actions to strictly apply Americans with Disabilities Act requirements to facilities designated as hurricane evacuation shelters have caused great concern regarding our ability to open, staff, and supply shelters in emergency situations. Florida's geography and susceptibility to hurricane-related storm surge and extreme winds result in a high demand for shelters with a limited supply of structurally suitable locations. Implementation of recently released FNSS guidance will critically exacerbate Florida's local sheltering capability challenges. Many of the accommodations compiled in the guidance cannot be implemented due to local budget cuts, layoffs, and exhausted resources. The service level expectations are unrealistic in a disaster environment, especially in the immediate pre-disaster hours in an event such as a hurricane. Personal responsibility should remain at the forefront for all individuals, members of the disabled community, those with medical needs and caregivers.

The ADA laws were designed to assist individuals with access to facilities and services during their daily lives. Disaster situations and the need for an altered standard of care were never considered when these laws were created. However, they are being applied without consideration of this fact.

We as local emergency managers would like to see a collaborative process established to develop realistic solutions that can be developed and applied to Florida emergency management practices, based upon the realities faced during disasters. It recently became evident at the 2011 Governor's Hurricane Conference (GHC) that the FEMA representative, the DOJ representative, and contractor responsible for assembling the document have no concept of hurricane risk sheltering operations at the local level. A comment shared by the DOJ staffer during the training was to eliminate the term "Special Needs". This was very frustrating, as Florida law specifies the Special Needs program and even the PKEMRA utilizes the term with direction to FEMA. Also, at the 2011 GHC, a "round-table" was held with the FEMA Disability Coordinator, an American Red Cross representative and local emergency management practitioners. During the meeting, the efforts in Alabama to utilize the FNSS guidelines after the recent devastating tornadoes were highlighted as a success. A very important distinction is that those shelters are post-event shelters. Florida emergency managers do not dispute the practicality of post shelters utilizing FNSS guidelines. Our major concern is "hurricane risk sheltering", and it seems that disability advocates and DOJ do not understand the importance of this distinction.

Florida's emergency managers remain committed to doing the right thing, but the right thing has to be doable. Accommodations are necessary for certain citizens during disasters, and Florida is very successful in doing this. The law however, must take into account the realities that exist during these events, and modify the expectations during the hours prior to a disaster, and the early hours and days following a disaster. Our goal now is to hold a summit to educate the disability advocates on the complexities of Hurricane Risk Sheltering, and work with them to find acceptable accommodation methods.

This is not just a Florida issue. Recently, in the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) newsletter, Ms. Lyn Gross, CEM, IAEM–USA Region 10 President, and Director of Emergency Services Coordinating Agency for Brier, Washington, wrote an article relating the numerous challenges all local emergency management programs face. I have had the opportunity to speak with Ms. Gross and I am including that article at the conclusion of my testimony. In discussion with Ms. Gross, she pointed out that in areas with earthquakes, it may not be possible to find a shelter building that is structurally sound following an earthquake, which will comply with ADA requirements.

STAFFORD ACT DUPLICATION OF BENEFITS

Current Federal regulations restrict FEMA from releasing Individual Assistance Program client benefit information to local Government entities. Without specific in-

formation on the amounts, types, and characteristics of assistance provided by Federal authorities, local, and State governments cannot evaluate or verify requests for assistance through their programs to protect against duplication of benefits. At the local level, we ask for access to client information only to assist our Federal partners to reduce potential waste and fraud.

The restriction inhibits the ability of local government officials to effectively and properly meet the needs of their citizens and disperse services to the affected constituents.

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATIONS USING CELLULAR TECHNOLOGY

FEPA supports the Personal Localized Alerting Network (PLAN) which is to be implemented by the FCC and FEMA at the Federal level through broadcasters and other media service providers. This new public safety system will allow customers who own an enabled mobile device to receive geographically-targeted, text-like messages alerting them of imminent threats to safety in their area. Authorized National, State, or local government officials will be able to send alerts regarding public safety emergencies, such as a tornado or a terrorist threat, to PLAN-enabled phones. We are anxious to receive additional details on the program and how it will integrate with National Weather Service's (NWS) watch and warning system.

We also support the continued Congressional funding of the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Weather Radio program, which is a vital component for notifying the public of all variety of incidents and what protective measures are to be taken to protect themselves.

DISASTER HOUSING

FEPA recognizes the significant challenges poised by disaster events that result in major damages or destruction of a community's existing housing stock. Florida's experience with the widespread damages during the 2004 and 2005 hurricane season reminded us that the broadest complement of disaster housing options must be considered post-event. My personal experience was with the Groundhog Day tornadoes of 2007.

While the PKEMRA did add utilities to the assistance program in many local areas, rental housing options are extremely limited. Moving survivors great distances from their neighborhoods severely disrupts individuals' ties to employment, schools, health care, houses of worship and other local services, both formal and informal, that sustain them day-to-day. Housing options that appear untenable during "blue skies" may be viable in a post-disaster environment. These decisions must be made collectively with local officials and must reflect the individual characteristics of the events and the communities affected.

The more recent experience in Alabama and Mississippi are evidence that all disaster housing options must be brought to that table to enable neighbors to remain with their neighbors to regroup, to recover what is left of their possessions, to mourn and comfort collectively to begin to regain some sense of normalcy.

Florida emergency managers support the use of disaster housing trailers on personal properties. However in catastrophic circumstances, we understand it may be necessary to deploy trailers collectively instead of on an individual level.

INDIVIDUAL ASSISTANCE (IA) AND PUBLIC ASSISTANCE (PA) RECOUPMENT

FEPA recognizes that FEMA has an important responsibility to be a good steward of public funds and this responsibility includes audits of disaster assistance provided to public entities and individuals. These financial assessments, however, must recognize the circumstances that existed at the time that the funds were provided. Disasters will always present situations that require a balance of getting relief funds to individuals and communities quickly, to help them recover with the requirement to protect against waste, misuse, and fraud. As a disaster event progresses, FEMA payment and reimbursement policies often are reviewed, revised, and re-tooled. FEPA recognizes that many of these refinements are designed to address the characteristics of the event and often benefit individuals and communities. At a minimum, Federal decisions, advice, and recommendations made during the early stages of an event must be better documented, communicated, and utilized for audits and evaluations that may take place years after funding is provided.

FEMA is sending out "Notice of Debt" letters to disaster assistance applicants who received Federal disaster assistance payments. Letters are being sent from the most recent disasters first. These letters will inform applicants of the amount and reason for their debt, and provide information on how to repay the debt or appeal FEMA's determination.

We understand the pressure to reduce waste and fraud, but spending more time and money to have consistent policies rather than recoupment on the back end would be more practical. It is important to the program and processes to have consistent staffing, and rely less on disaster assistance employees.

FLORIDA EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS ASSOCIATION INITIATIVES

- *Private Public Partnership Committee*.—This is a new committee in partnership with FDEM's Private Sector Coordinator that will enable the engagement of the large number of private entities in our membership with public sector emergency management programs. The focus is to explore innovative methods to meet the challenges in the current economic environment.
- *Technology Committee*.—This committee is working to educate FEPA membership on utilization of social media such as Facebook and Twitter along with being available to assess new technological services available to our membership.
- *Higher Education Committee*.—This committee is responsible for establishing a process in which Florida college and university Emergency Management academic programs that meet an established criteria receive an endorsement from FEPA. The concept is to provide students with a recognized program which will properly prepare them to be emergency management professionals.
- *Certification Commission*.—The Certification Commission administers the Association's Certification Program. The committee is responsible for promoting and managing the Associations' Certification Program, the only Florida-specific credentialing program for Emergency Management professionals. FEPA offers three certification levels Florida Emergency Management Volunteer (FEMV), Florida Associate Emergency Manager (FAEM), and Florida Professional Emergency Manager (FPEM).
- *Training and Development Committee*.—This committee is responsible for the training and development programs and initiatives of the Association. The Training and Development Committee has established three subcommittees: Training Subcommittee for curriculum development and training initiatives, Instructor Subcommittee for instructor credentials and program monitoring, and the FEPA Academy Subcommittee for planning, administration, and implementation of the Emergency Management Basic and Intermediate Academies.

CONCLUSION

In closing, I would like to thank you again for the opportunity to share my views and experiences with you at this important event. Florida is fortunate to have been spared the devastation of a direct hit of a hurricane for 6 years. The 2011 Hurricane Season is predicted to be an extremely active one and will more than likely test Florida's emergency management system, perhaps multiple times and in multiple locations. Should we experience an event it will provide us the opportunity to evaluate more aspects of the PKEMRA. With your continued support and our collective capabilities, capacities, and resources, Florida's emergency management professionals stand ready to serve our communities.

ATTACHMENT.—IAEM BULLETIN MAY 2011

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT: THE NEXT EM HURDLE

By Lyn Gross, CEM, IAEM–USA Region 10 President, and Director, Emergency Services Coordinating Agency, Brier, Washington

Recent litigation over the application of the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in disasters has brought into focus the next administrative disaster awaiting emergency management practitioners in the United States. It appears that Title 2 of the ADA is being aggressively applied to emergency management without regard to the reality that an altered standard of care applies across the board when disaster strikes. There is a grave potential for real damage to occur if left unaddressed.

This is one issue that is causing emergency managers across the country to lose sleep. In the midst of reduced staffing and budget cuts, we are at a loss, not only because of the complexity of the issue itself, but also because the ability to meet these standards is so far out of reach during a disaster. The ADA laws were designed to assist individuals with access to facilities and services during their daily lives. Having spent a period of time on the physically disabled list myself a few years ago, I can appreciate the effort and the intent. Clearly, disaster situations and the resulting altered standard of care were never considered in these laws, yet they

are currently being applied in this arena for lack of anything more realistic having been developed. Surely common sense must kick in somewhere.

While FEMA's *Guidance on Planning for Integration of Functional Needs Support Services in General Population Shelters (FNSS)* provides guidance, the service level expectations remain unrealistic in the disaster environment. Unfortunately, the FNSS Guidance appears to have been developed in a vacuum without a comment period, and without input from the practitioners who are expected to implement the program. The general practice of including the emergency management community at the State and local level in the development process seems to have been entirely overlooked.

A staff member in my office has a disabled child and participates in the IAEM–USA Special Needs Caucus. As the parent of a disabled person, she believes that while attention to the matter is important, the expectations of the disability community must be realistic, and personal responsibility should remain at the forefront for individuals and caregivers.

From Awareness to Operations

The current work of the Special Needs Caucus is focused on increasing the awareness of emergency managers regarding the wide scope of "access and functional needs." However, current efforts have not yet attempted to address the operational and logistical issues encountered by local emergency managers. In order to address the issue at hand, we must get past "awareness" and move resolutely into the "operations" required for the task.

What are the basic questions that need to be answered in order to move forward in a meaningful way? What are the minimum standards? If they are the same as day-to-day laws and regulations, then we have no hope of ever being compliant. Perhaps if we can get past the awareness level and obtain answers to some basic questions, we can accomplish the necessary tasks to meet minimal needs.

Across the United States, there are task forces, committees, and work groups attempting to address this difficult problem. Yet as an educated and experienced practitioner with many disasters behind me, I've seen much idealism and not much pragmatism applied to the issue. Though my connections are good at the National level, I've not seen even one completed plan in place that addresses this need to the level the FNSS Guidance suggests we should. I suggest that this guidance is unattainable in the midst of the logistical challenges and overwhelming resource shortages we face during a disaster event. As an emergency manager looking at the scope of this issue, I want to know if I am going to face legal action for trying, yet missing the mark. If so, why try? We have an "altered standard of care" at every level and in every function in disaster response—why not here?

A solution requires adequate resources and reasonable policy. We all want to do the right thing, but the right thing has to be doable. We support the concept and idea that some special accommodations are necessary during emergencies and disasters. The law however, also must take into account the realities that exist during these events, and modify the requirements and expectations during the early hours and days following a disaster. A glimmer of hope comes from the recent Department of Justice changes to the definition of service animals. Perhaps common sense is coming into play?

I suggest a need to identify the questions and to address legislative clarification, or even change if necessary, to support the accomplishment of this monumental task. Thus far we have grumbled about the lack of focus on reality in the laws that apply during a disaster event. Yet we as emergency managers have not made an effort to address the issue at the National level. We must shake off the shock effect we've encountered by recent events and insert ourselves, invited or not, into this process to address this issue head on. It is essential that we bring together organizations, agencies, and partners to realistically address this issue, both legally and practically, with responsibility, pragmatism, and good judgment.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you very much.

Now, I would like to recognize Mr. Russell for 5 minutes or so. Thanks for making the trip.

STATEMENT OF JOHN E. "RUSTY" RUSSELL, DIRECTOR HUNSTVILLE-MADISON COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY TESTIFYING ON BEHALF OF INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EMERGENCY MANAGERS

Mr. RUSSELL. Thank you for allowing us to testify. Chairman Bilirakis, Representative Clarke, we appreciate being here. Thank you for your comments about Alabama, it is deeply appreciated.

I have been an emergency manager for 16 years in my county and I have been active in the International Association of Emergency Managers and I am here to represent them this morning. IAEM, as you know, is our largest association of emergency managers with over 5,000 members.

My jurisdiction is Madison County in north Alabama, north central Alabama, population 360,000. We have the largest population of engineers and scientists and we have the second-largest research park, all to support the space and missile industry.

The tornado outbreak in 1974 had 148 tornadoes in 13 States. In comparison, in April we had 103 tornadoes in Alabama alone. On April 27, 221 people were killed, 13,000 buildings and homes were destroyed. In north Alabama, we lost power for in some places 7 days. We had to use generators to keep the infrastructure going and we found out the problems generators cause and the problems they solve and we are going to be better prepared next time. This is Alabama's largest disaster ever. We estimate more than $4.2 billion in damages as of now.

I have got to say, FEMA did a good job this time. They came in, they responded to our needs in an efficient way that we have not seen before in other disasters. FEMA assumed a more proactive stance up front and worked actively to address our issues. In my county, over 16,000 residents have been registered by FEMA already. The disaster recovery center we set up was expanded to include all the other agencies that could possibly give help. We appreciate FEMA's willingness to help us do that.

There is a new program called Operation Clean Sweep that is being introduced by FEMA and the Corps of Engineers. Basically this allows the Corps of Engineers to go on private property but the property owner must sign a right of entry form.

Another thing they are doing that is new and that is good is the disaster mitigation funding. It normally takes about a year to be available. FEMA has come in and with us are trying to make those funds available faster so that we can go ahead and start to build back safer. Instead of waiting a year or 2, we would be able to start in a couple of months.

There are FEMA issues with EMAC reimbursement and I agree with Ms. Dragani that EMAC is a wonderful program. It gets the resources on the ground where they need to be in an efficient manner, within the first 48 hours being able to do the rescue mission. However, even though we respond fast, the reimbursement can take up to 30 months in some instances. We would like to see that reimbursement process streamlined.

FEMA's Emergency Management Institute has greatly increased the quality and availability of training in recent years. In our after-action review, we saw the benefit of several courses we had at-

tended. We also identified courses to be taken in the future. We strongly recommend continued support of EMI.

The Emergency Management Performance Grant has a history stretching back 5 decades. This assistance program is fundamentally different than the Homeland Security Grants. The required 50 percent cost-share demonstrates the partnership between local, State, and Federal governments. Without EMPG, some counties in Alabama would not even have an emergency management program. Continued support of EMPG is essential for the preparedness of communities across the Nation.

We cannot have a good emergency management program without the involvement of the entire community, including volunteers and their organizations. In addition to traditional responders—fire, police, and EMS—volunteer organizations enhance and complete the communities' response to disasters. Alabama has embraced these volunteer programs and has trained hundreds of volunteers.

The Metropolitan Medical Response System has been a cornerstone of our medical and responder team building since 2002. With this funding, we have developed plans and enhanced medical response capabilities in 14 counties across north Alabama. Our Medical Reserve Corps and other aspects of our health and medical infrastructure have benefitted greatly from MMR's funding. I provide some examples in my written testimony.

In conclusion, there seems to be a revitalization of attitude and purpose in the folks at FEMA. If the proven Federal, State, and local partnership programs—EMPG, MMRS, and CERT—can be maintained or enhanced and the innovative Clean Sweep and HMGP program changes I have mentioned become a reality, disaster survivors will be further down the road to their "new normal" more quickly than any time in the past decade. It seems that reduction of red tape and striving to do the right thing because it is the right thing will actually work after all.

I will be happy to answer any questions.

[The statement of Mr. Russell follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOHN "RUSTY" RUSSELL

JUNE 10, 2011

Chairman Bilirakis, Ranking Member Richardson, and distinguished Members of the subcommittee thank you for this opportunity to share ideas and provide testimony on this vital topic. I am John "Rusty" Russell, the Director of Emergency Management for Madison County, Alabama. I have been a local government emergency manager for 16 years after serving in the U.S. Army for 22 years, and retiring as a Master Sergeant.

I have also served as the president of Region IV of the U.S. Council of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM–USA) and as president of the Alabama Association of Emergency Managers. I am providing this statement on behalf of IAEM–USA on the disaster response in Alabama and how the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is responding.

IAEM is our Nation's largest association of emergency management professionals, with 5,000 members including emergency managers at the State and local government levels, Tribal nations, the military, colleges and universities, private business and the nonprofit sector. Most of our members are U.S. city and county emergency managers who perform the crucial function of coordinating and integrating the efforts at the local level to prepare for, mitigate the effects of, respond to, and recover from all types of disasters including terrorist attacks. We deeply appreciate the subcommittee's interest in strengthening emergency management and particularly your outreach to local emergency managers.

My jurisdiction is Madison County in north central Alabama, which has a population of 360,000. We have a major concentration of highly technological industry to support the National Aeronautic and Space Administration (NASA), the Army's aviation and missile programs and other high-tech government initiatives. The city of Huntsville has the second-largest research park and the largest population of scientists and engineers in the country. The Tennessee River forms the southern border of the county and is a major river transportation corridor. We are served by an international airport, two railroads, and an interstate highway.

Madison County has a history of being pro-active in community preparedness. Since 1971, 16 counties in north Alabama have been members of the North Alabama Mutual Aid Association. The association consists of local Emergency Management Agencies (EMA) and the extended community of response and public safety organizations such as the Alabama Department of Environmental Resources, Department of Public Health, National Weather Service, and local, State, and Congressional elected official's staff members. Every county and city government has signed our mutual aid agreement. Coordination and response from county-to-county has become almost automatic and is encouraged by the State. The majority of emergency incidents are coordinated locally without help from the State or Federal agencies. It is the practice of our association that local resources should be used first. We are very supportive of planning for the "Whole Community"; in fact we have been planning as a whole community at the local level since the Civil Defense days.

Almost anyone in Emergency Management has studied the great tornado outbreak of 1974. On April 3, 1974, 148 tornadoes struck 13 States. In comparison, on April 15, 2011, there were 48 tornadoes and on April 27, 55 more in Alabama alone.

The April 27 tornadoes trained across the northern two-thirds of the State for nearly 18 hours. In some areas as many as four storm tracks overlapped each other.

The swarm of tornadoes killed 241 people across Alabama and destroyed or heavily damaged more than 13,000 buildings State-wide. The American Red Cross said its State-wide assessment of damaged residences showed that twisters destroyed 6,237 single-family homes across Alabama and heavily damaged another 5,039 homes. Of these, 1,890 were mobile homes.

To add insult to injury, electrical power was lost to most of North Alabama for 5 to 7 days. Not only were we facing the devastation from the tornadoes but we now had an energy crisis as well. North Alabama is serviced by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). A large section of their major transmission line system was destroyed. Large generators had to be brought in to keep water systems and other critical infrastructure from failing. County-wide curfews were initiated to stem looting and to keep people safely away from the damaged areas during the night. In the night sky, without the lights of the city, there were more visible stars than I had ever imagined. You could actually see tiny satellites moving if you looked carefully.

Power was restored slowly and incrementally as they rebuilt the system. A significant area did not get power back until 7 days after the storm. As you can imagine, this greatly compounded the emergency as the local utility companies could not begin their repairs until the TVA lines were rebuilt. We had spent hours and hours discussing generators in our National Incident Management System (NIMS) resource typing workshops, but we still learned more about generators, the problems they solve and the problems they cause than I ever wanted to know.

This is expected to be the most costly disaster our State has ever faced. The event caused an estimated $4.2 billion in damages with insured losses between $2 and $3 billion.

I am pleased to report that FEMA has responded to Alabama's needs in a much more efficient way than in past disasters. The affected counties were assigned a FEMA liaison during the initial response which greatly enhanced the flow of information and coordination. During a discussion with our county's FEMA liaison, he said the mindset of FEMA has changed over the past few years from preparing to respond 3 days after the disaster to preparing for immediate response in the affected State or 5 days prior to landfall for a hurricane. I can speak first-hand to the response during Hurricane Ivan and Hurricane Katrina and the difference between then and now, is night and day. Anyone working in response activities across Alabama will quickly realize that there is a true partnership between local, State, and Federal organizations. The much-needed resources are being efficiently delivered on time and where they are most needed.

In my county, over 16,000 residents have already been registered by FEMA for disaster assistance. We were able to expand the Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) to include not only FEMA and the Small Business Administration (SBA) but also Social Security Administration (SSA), Veteran's Administration (VA), local builders association, local real-estate association, Better Business Bureau (BBB), crisis counseling, and Faith Based and Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD)

representatives. The FEMA folks were actively engaged in providing one-stop service for the affected families.

FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers have begun to initiate a new program called "Operation Clean Sweep". This program will enable property owners in the worst impacted areas to apply for assistance to remove debris from their private property. They must submit a right of entry form to the Corps. This program when proven successful will be a major leap towards the recovery of communities during future disasters.

Another example of FEMA's new nimbleness could be a change in the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program which provides post-disaster assistance. The availability of post-disaster mitigation funds normally takes 8 months to a year after the disaster. Currently, at the request of the local communities, Alabama, and FEMA are trying to coordinate for the immediate availability of a significant portion of the anticipated post-disaster mitigation funding for Alabama's tornadoes. This will be the biggest rebuild effort Alabama has ever faced. People want to start rebuilding now and may not take protective measures like in-home safe rooms and community shelters if mitigation funds are not readily available for another year. If this first time "early" funding becomes a reality, we can start planning and building back for a safer community after only 1 or 2 months instead of 1 or 2 years. It would be a substantial benefit to disaster survivors Nation-wide if the post-disaster mitigation program was streamlined similarly for future disasters.

I can faithfully say, based on the response I have witnessed in Alabama, and the willingness to tailor their efforts to our needs, FEMA has come a long way from years past.

While the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) is not a FEMA-run program, there are FEMA reimbursement issues associated with it. EMAC is the agreement between all 50 States ratified by Congress that provides form and structure to interstate mutual aid. EMAC works well to get the right resources to the right place in time to conduct emergency rescue and response in the impacted area. However, some States have had problems with the reimbursement process. Alabama's counties and cities were able to provide resources to other gulf States through EMAC within 48 hours and some counties were still not reimbursed after 30 months or longer.

The Madison Fire Department's heavy rescue unit was deployed during Hurricane Katrina in September 2006. While the response was immediate and the mission only lasted a couple of weeks, it took until June 2008 to get them fully reimbursed.

The Madison Fire Department's Heavy Rescue Unit was deployed again along with a Team of Madison County Sherriff's Deputies during the Hurricane Gustav response in September 2008. Once again, the response was immediate and the mission was completed within a couple of weeks, however, it took until January 2010 to get them reimbursed.

Cullman County opened a shelter under EMAC to house evacuees from Hurricane Gustav. Since Cullman County has a relatively small police department, off-duty officers were brought in to provide security at the shelter. The reimbursement claim for approximately $40,000 was paid in January 2011. It would seem that $40,000 is not such a large amount; but to a small police department, it was a budget buster.

It is our fear that slow reimbursement will eventually result in reluctance to lend critical resources under EMAC due to the adverse economic impact on local budgets.

Over the past few years, FEMA's Emergency Management Institute (EMI) in Emmitsburg, Maryland has greatly increased the training that is available to emergency managers and responders. Increasingly frequent delivery of these courses in State and local venues as well as the development and update of many new on-line courses has lead to a stronger more robust emergency management community in Alabama. Last year our staff was able to attend both debris management and volunteer management training. During our internal after-action review, we were discussing how relevant the training is and reviewing the course list to see what else we could have benefitted from in the aftermath of the storm. There were several new courses since the last time I reviewed the list. Recommended training will be part of our after-action review and we will be even better prepared next time.

For the last few years, the State of Alabama has passed through a substantial percentage of Emergency Management Program Grant (EMPG) funding to local EMAs. Building strong local programs and fostering State-wide mutual aid agreements enabled counties to quickly assess the extent of and begin the response to a truly catastrophic disaster before the wind stopped blowing. Counties were helping each other during the initial response and are still providing mutual aid as we speak. EMPG with its history stretching over 5 decades continues to allow local and State governments to develop basic emergency management capability even in these

difficult economic times. In the absence of EMPG funding, there are counties in Alabama that would not have full-time emergency managers. It is fundamentally different than the post-September 11, 2001 homeland security grants, and symbolizes the true partnership between local and State governments with its 50 percent cost share. EMPG has enabled Alabama to develop a well-trained and experienced cadre of emergency managers and is demonstrated by our rapid transition from response to recovery in light of the severity of the event.

Through strong county programs in Alabama, we were able to build partnerships with Government, volunteer, non-profit, and private sector organizations. These partnerships resulted in some remarkable accomplishments.

Our local Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) has been recruiting member organizations for the past 7 years. The various faith-based and volunteer groups have developed internal guidance which helps to minimize duplication of effort and improve efficiency in resource allocation within the community. On a regular basis, they sponsor training events and participate in the county's exercise program. As an Emergency Management Director, I am blessed to have one-stop shopping for the management of volunteer and donated resources during an emergency. The utilization of volunteer reception centers and the ability to match volunteer resources with the unmet needs in the community, greatly improved our ability to respond and recover. The credentialing of volunteers also helped provide controlled access to the impacted areas during the response.

Alabama has actively embraced the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program from its inception. With a portion of our EMPG and Citizen Corps funding, our county has trained more than 540 people and 30 teams including employee groups at local businesses such as Teledyne Brown, SAIC, Dynetics Corporation, The U.S. Space and Rocket Center as well as many neighborhoods. During the recent disaster, they served in the volunteer reception centers as coordinators and as leaders for groups of untrained spontaneous volunteers in the field. Some counties used CERT teams to distribute ice, water, food, and tarps in the affected areas. Others had their CERT teams active in the immediate response. Billy Green, Assistant Director for Tuscaloosa EMA, writes:

"I guess my biggest highlight is on Saturday April 23 I graduated my first all Hispanic CERT Team. They were members of the Knights of Columbus from Holy Spirit. Who would have ever known that on Wednesday they would be putting all their skills to use? Several of them lived in the Alberta City area that was affected. They came together and first began search and rescue. I was actually unaware of them getting out until we took the tour with the Governor and I look up and there is a truck load of Hispanic guys wearing CERT vests and helmets. Those were my guys!!!! I actually got a call from Indiana about their use of Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) markings. They would later assist the Tuscaloosa Police Department as translators. They would go on to staff a shelter at Holy Spirit Catholic Church. I'm really proud of them. I also had several individuals from my Campus CERT Class that helped out in the areas where they lived. They however, acted individually and not as a group. But they used the training to take care of themselves which allowed them to help their neighbor. One of them has volunteered at our Volunteer Reception Center and is now working for the City of Tuscaloosa as part of the disaster response."

The Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS) funding has been the cornerstone of our medical and responder team building since 2002. We have been able to develop plans and build medical response capability in 14 counties across north Alabama. We were able to provide training and exercises that have added cohesion to the way traditional responders and medical professionals work together during emergencies.

In November, 2007, a Huntsville City School bus with a driver and 41 students plunged 75 feet from an interstate overpass in Huntsville. The bus landed vertically and toppled over killing three students and injuring several others. The response was immediate and working within the MMRS plan 40 students were transported to our two major hospitals within the first 50 minutes after the accident. The actual emergency part of the response was quickly and definitively over after 1 hour although the media frenzy and the investigation lasted for months. The very same responders and hospital personnel had participated in an eerily similar exercise just days before which involved a simulated airplane crash.

During and after the 18-hour onslaught of the recent tornadoes, responders, and medical teams were activated and the emergency medical equipment and supplies provided through the MMRS program were deployed and used in the impacted areas of even the most rural counties. The planning and training paid off and surely helped save many lives as trauma victims were quickly triaged and cared for. In

my county, 49 patients were dug out of the debris and transported during the first 24 hours. Hundreds self-presented to the emergency rooms over the next few days. Responders and hospital staff were readily able to coordinate and communicate and provide efficient patient tracking.

The North Alabama Medical Reserve Corp (MRC), now more than 300 members strong, was developed as an MMRS initiative in 2006. Our MRC is comprised of retired and active medical and non-medical professionals and serves 16 counties. On a daily basis, they staff the county's free clinic and assist with medical and health-related outreach programs in schools and senior centers. They man booths at community events to give out brochures, answer questions, and even check blood pressure. They provide comfort stations during sporting events in our summer heat. They assist the Health Department in the fall with the flu vaccines. In partnership with the Alabama Department of Public Health, we provided continuing education opportunities so retired professionals could maintain their certifications. The MRC is also a member of our VOAD.

During the storms, MRC teams were deployed immediately. They staffed 211 lines and medical hot lines which handled thousands of calls from confused and anxious citizens. They also established and staffed temporary clinics in the impacted areas to administer tetanus vaccine and treatment of minor injuries.

Cullman County's State Mortuary Team (SMORT) that was partially funded by MMRS was deployed in north east Alabama. Twenty-six victims were respectfully processed there during the initial response.

Each year there is a proposal to severely cut or do away with the MMRS program. Loss of MMRS funding will result in degradation of the ability to maintain and coordinate these essential capabilities. MMRS needs to be maintained as a separate program.

In conclusion, while FEMA has been sluggish and bogged down by bureaucratic oversight in the past, there seems to be a revitalization of the attitude and purpose in the FEMA folks I have dealt with during this event. If the long-established and proven Federal, State, and local partnership programs, EMPG, MMRS, and CERT can be maintained or enhanced and the innovative Clean Sweep and HMGP program changes I have discussed become reality, disaster survivors will be further down the road to their "new normal" more quickly than any time in the past decade. It seems that reduction of red tape and striving to do the right thing because it is the right thing will actually work after all. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you, sir, appreciate very much.

Ms. Willis, you are recognized for 5 minutes or so.

STATEMENT OF CHAUNCIA WILLIS, EMERGENCY COORDINATOR, OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, CITY OF TAMPA, FLORIDA

Ms. WILLIS. Okay, thank you, sir. Chairman Bilirakis and Ranking Member Clarke, thank you for having me today. I am the emergency coordinator for the City of Tampa and also the Medical Response System Program Manager and a member of the Urban Area Security Initiative working group. It is an honor for me to be with you today; thank you very much.

Today, I am here to highlight the enormous benefits that this area has received from Federal grant funding and programs and to clearly outline the detrimental effect that would be evident if Federal money is cut. I believe this open discussion will be extremely beneficial and provide us with new opportunities and other options to consider. Terrorists hijacking planes and attacking buildings in New York City and Washington, DC; hijackers boarding planes in Los Angeles with destruction in mind, and so forth—true, these super-sized larger cities have experienced the tragic results of sadistic planning. But we find consistently that the majority of planning for these attacks is done in the medium- to large-sized cities, cities like the ones that make up Tampa Bay, Florida. This region is target-rich. Tampa Bay is home to over 5,000 catalogued critical

infrastructure targets. The Bay area is a major banking center, home to numerous backup facilities for the Nation's largest banks; MacDill Air Force Base, which is home for the war being fought in Iraq and Afghanistan; the Port of Tampa, the State's largest port which brings in 50 percent of the fuel to the State of Florida and also houses massive tanks filled with sulphur, gasoline, and ammonia.

The Tampa Bay region is vulnerable to a wide variety of natural and man-made threats. It is also host to a number of special events to include Super Bowl championships and National conventions, not to mention our famous Gasparilla pirates. How is it then that anyone would think it appropriate to reduce funding to a location that is so rife with high-risk targets?

These grants have been critical to the lives and well-being of our residents and the Nation as a whole. The truth of the matter is that we cannot afford to cut funding that has been so useful, so vital for our region and if funds are cut, we will have no way to protect our citizens who live amongst these high-risk threats. Does a life in New York have more value than a life in Tampa Bay? No.

In the event of a disaster, emergency responders and emergency managers from all disciplines must have the resources they need to execute an effective and coordinated response. These programs and grants are critical to this process by providing the resources to train, equip, and integrate the necessary responders. Without Federal grant funding, a major disruptive event in this region is likely to take on a life of its own, crippling our first responders and depriving our residents, businesses, and visitors of a quick well-coordinated response. Such an outcome will most certainly have negative consequences that far exceed the region and will negatively impact the State of Florida and potentially this Nation as a whole.

The Tampa Bay Region is one of the Nation's success stories for a multitude of reasons. This funding means more than just more assets and more technology. Our Federal funding has allowed us to come together as a team and an 8-county regional partnership. We are not like other areas where the police and fire do not work well together or where the city will not speak to the county. We were made stronger because everyone was given a seat at the table and told to pull up a chair. That is remarkable and it means something. Tampa Bay is doing it right.

Before making the decision on funding cuts, I would like to encourage you to do three things. First, put together a peer review of funding justifications. Establish a group of subject matter experts that will conduct an analysis of each State's funding versus positive regional impacts. Have each one verify success. This process will be considered to be a very fair and judicious process for determining funding. A peer review also takes away the waste of lobbyists who push for more funding in cities that cannot and will not ever demonstrate that they have spent past money appropriately.

Second, I would like to encourage you to conduct a hazard-based analysis. Ninety years ago, the Tampa Bay metro area had a population of less than 150,000, when it experienced the hurricane. Only 10 people were killed, most due to a storm surge of 10 feet. Today, over 3 million people live in that area, roughly 20 times more than in 1921.

Now consider the unpredictable weather patterns that we are experiencing today. What if a hurricane of a similar track were to strike today and what if it was even stronger? Without the Federal funds that have allowed us to invest in preparedness programs to plan, train, purchase equipment, et cetera, would we be in a position to help ourselves or would we need to wait for help from the larger cities who received grant funding and program assistance?

Last, I recommend holding these larger cities to the same standards that we are held to. Here, over 50 percent of the funds are spent on establishing inter-operable communications, cataloguing and assessing critical infrastructure, and using the funding to spur innovation and progress for the area.

Every State, each one, every one needs to be responsible and prudent with the funding that it receives.

In conclusion, these three alternative options—instituting a peer review process, conducting a hazard analysis, and demonstrating equity in funding—should, in my view, be the top priority as Congress considers how to properly distribute funding without—as Homeland Security Committee Chairman Peter King said, without giving our Nation's enemies an invitation to attack us.

Thank you so much.

[The statement of Ms. Willis follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHAUNCIA WILLIS

JUNE 10, 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is imperative that the Tampa Bay Region retain its Federally-funded emergency management programs and grants. In these uncertain times, it is especially important that this region is prepared for all threats and disasters. In the event of a disaster, emergency responders from all disciplines must have the resources they need to execute an effective and coordinated response. These programs and grants are critical to this process by providing resources to train, equip, and integrate the necessary responders. Without Federal grant funding, a major disruptive event in this region is likely to take on a life of its own, crippling our first responders and depriving our residents, businesses, and visitors of a quick, well-coordinated response. Such an outcome will most certainly have negative consequences that far exceed the Region, and will negatively impact the State of Florida and this Nation as a whole.

The Tampa Bay Region consists of eight counties and is located centrally on Florida's west coast. The region includes the counties of Pinellas, Hillsborough, Pasco, Polk, Hernando, Hardee, Citrus, and Sumter. The region consists of over 7,024 square miles and has an estimated population of 3,494,869 people. The region includes the Tampa Bay Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The area is the second-largest populated MSA in Florida and the nineteenth-largest MSA in the United States.

What many people do not know about the Tampa Bay Region is that it is home to over 5,000 cataloged critical infrastructure targets, many of which have National impact. Tampa Bay is a major banking center, host to numerous backup facilities for the Nation's largest banks; MacDill Air Force Base, home base for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; the Tampa Port which brings in 50% of fuel brought into the State of Florida and houses Chemical Formulators; the Tampa International Airport, one of the Nation's busiest airports; biological research laboratories at the University of South Florida, and the list goes on.

Before making the decision to withhold Federal funding and in effect cripple this region and its ability to positively respond to major threats, an assessment of the known threats that have been cataloged and the potential threats that exist for the Tampa Bay Region should be considered. Furthermore, the benefits that have already been made evident by the efficient use of Federal grant dollars should be considered. This region operates using a variety of grant programs, each mission-specific. Two grant programs in particular will be described in detail: The Urban Area

Security Initiative and Metropolitan Medical Response System grant. These grant programs clearly demonstrate the urgent need for sustained funding.

URBAN AREA SECURITY INITIATIVE

The Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) Grant Program provides funding to address the unique planning, organization, equipment, training, and exercise needs of high-threat, high-density urban areas, and assists them in building an enhanced and sustainable capacity to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from acts of terrorism. Per the 9/11 Act, States are required to ensure that at least 25 percent of UASI-appropriated funds are dedicated towards law enforcement terrorism prevention activities. The Tampa Bay Area began receiving UASI funding in 2003. Since that time, this region has been able to purchase and successfully implement over 39 programs and projects that have made tremendous positive impacts to the region.

Cop Link

Cop Link is a system that organizes data to provide tactical, strategic, and command-level users with access to shared data in single or multiple consolidated repositories. It is an analytical tool that pulls data from many police databases from the City of Tampa, Hillsborough County and other surrounding agencies, and then puts it in a common language. The data is then merged together based on many different factors and gives law enforcement personnel intelligence that would normally not be shared among police departments. It pulls in Person, Vehicle, Gun, Pawn, Locations, and Phone Number info and relates it to Arrest, Offense, and Calls for Service, Citation, and Street Check data. All this data is coupled with Crime Analysis tools.

By crossing this data between jurisdictions, it allows an officer or detective to get information that normally would take weeks to put together in a matter of seconds. The system can be accessed by multiple jurisdictions and detectives can electronically share information on cases at all times. The system has transformed the crime fight because now officers on the street are able to conduct complete investigations from their cars. Detectives are solving crimes in record time.

Avalex Technologies

Avalex is an airborne system that provides street maps, electronic markers, tracking systems, and infra-red television/video recordings for Airborne Law Enforcement. A flight crew needs several things to happen to make the mission successful. They have no time to search through stacks of maps while working an incident or call for police service. They have no time to ask officers on the ground for directions so that they can perform their duties as Airborne Law Enforcement. They must know where they are, and where they are going at all times. In order to perform their functions properly and safely, Airborne Law Enforcement use the moving map systems found in Avalex Technologies.

The powerful mapping system works by using a 2.65+ GHZ Pentium 4 processor and Windows XP. It provides real-time GPS moving map data to the flight crew. They can choose between street maps, marine charts, and topographical maps anywhere in the State of Florida. Recorded digital ortho quads provide aerial digital photographs for the City of Tampa, all of Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties. Avalex also provides both FAA VFR charts and IFR charts for navigation. This system will help in situational awareness and flight safety.

E-Sponder

E-Sponder is a web-based incident management and collaboration portal. The incident management provides multi-jurisdictional/multi-agency collaboration, planning, recovery, and mitigation of emergency and special events, whether man-made or natural. Since its installation in 2006, it has been used to manage over 675 emergencies, events, and exercises throughout Hillsborough, Pasco, and Pinellas County. Collaboration sites such as E-Sponder allow information to be shared across agency boundaries in a secure environment. Collaboration sites have been created for the Regional Tampa Bay Intel Unit to share bulletins, Regional Preventive Radiological and Nuclear Detection (PRND), to track all radiological detections, and Regional School Resource Deputy/Officer Site share Intel between schools, districts, and agencies. Sites to be added are a Regional Mutual-Aid site to track available resources and a Regional Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) site to share and track intel.

Interoperable Communications Technology

The horrific events of on 9/11 demonstrated the need for interoperable communications among first responders. Interoperable communications systems and tech-

nology are critical to saving the lives of first responders and our citizens. As such, the UASI program partnered with the Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Program (ICTAP) through DHS and performed an assessment of communications assets throughout the region, which made short-term and long-term recommendations for changes. The short-term recommendations specifically addressed the Tampa Police Department moving from an antiquated UHF system to an 800 MHz System, which was completed in 2009. Long-term recommendations are to implement standards-based regional P25 communications systems. The interoperable radio system is a collection of voice-over programmable technologies with "open architecture" for the entire Tampa Bay UASI.

Pinellas County agencies began a multi-year year project in 2006 with the goal of migrating the existing infrastructure to P25 technology. Hillsborough County followed in 2007 with a multi-year strategy for their countywide communications system. The Tampa Bay Area strategy aligns with the goals in the State-wide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP), and the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP). Since 2006, the Tampa Bay Region has made significant strides in the system infrastructure migration to P25 technology for interoperability; however there is still a $20 million shortfall to complete the implementation of the standards-based technology throughout the 8-county Region.

ETeam

Maintaining situational awareness is vital for a hazard-rich community such as Tampa Bay. Tampa Bay UASI and its associated agencies have taken the most appropriate and cost-effective steps necessary to mitigate the risks. One of the most important steps toward mitigating regional risks was purchasing a shared information management system, ETeam. The overall goal of having an information-sharing system is to enhance the ability of Tampa Bay's local emergency management agencies to prepare, prevent, respond, and recover from catastrophic events and incidents spanning jurisdictional boundaries. ETeam was selected by the region as the solution for situational awareness because it has demonstrated its ability to put multiple agencies in the best position to save lives, reduce injuries, and protect property and the environment. This system has served as a force multiplier by enhancing the efficient use of multi-jurisdictional resources.

Risk Analysis Center

The Risk Analysis Center (RAC) software platform provides the foundation for homeland security risk management solutions, through its integration, analysis, and visualization of risk data. Digital Sandbox has created a suite of applications and services that enable critical infrastructure planners and stakeholders analyze their risks, understand their capabilities, and allocate resources based on risk.

RAC is a web-based application tool that is utilized to gather information about critical infrastructure in the Tampa Bay area. To date, 5,174 assets have been identified and catalogued in the RAC. In addition, full field assessments have been completed on hundreds of infrastructures throughout the 8-county Tampa Bay Area. Intelligence data collection and assessment features enable users to gather asset information in a single location, establish asset priority, and systematically assess vulnerability to and consequences of a jurisdiction's threats and hazards. A detailed report, complete with security options to consider, is then provided to the asset owner. This approach promotes security awareness which leads to planning and implementation of enhancements, designed to help prevent, deter, and/or respond to major incidents, whether natural or man-made. This type of effort strongly encourages continued regional collaboration and information sharing among community stakeholders.

APPLICATION OF FUNDING WITH LOCAL IMPACTS

Cop Link, Avalex, E-Sponder, and Interoperable Communications. Why are these systems and processes critical to the region, to core cities like Tampa? These very systems were used to manage one of the city's most horrendous local tragedies to ever occur in the Tampa Bay Area. On June 29, 2010, Officers Jeffrey Kocab and David Curtis were shot and killed while attempting to make an arrest at a traffic stop. Officer Curtis stopped a vehicle because it did not have a visible license plate. He called for an additional unit to assist him because a male passenger in the car was wanted on a misdemeanor charge for writing a worthless check. When Officer Curtis arrived, he and Officer Kocab attempted to arrest the suspect. The suspect drew a weapon and shot both officers at close range. A witness called 9–1–1 to report the shooting. Officer Kocab died shortly after arriving at the hospital and Officer Curtis was pronounced dead a few hours later. After a 4-day manhunt, the suspect was arrested and taken into custody.

Cop Link, Avalex, E-Sponder, and Interoperable Communications. Each of these systems and many more like it were in full use in the Command Post, where law enforcement from the city, county, State, and Federal government spent 4 days searching for the murderer that left two wives without their husbands and small children without their fathers. Cop Link was used in the Command Post to perform Crime Analysis and share information with the multitude of law enforcement agencies there to assist. Avalex was used to perform airborne search and tracking. E-Sponder was used for incident management, resource tracking and multi-agency collaboration. Interoperable Communications were vital as communications was coordinated on common systems, mutual aid channels, and console patches between local, State, and Federal law enforcement agencies. UASI funding made it possible. The investment in technology, communications, and training provided the foundation from which TPD could provide a joint, well-coordinated structure to manage an unspeakable tragedy. This incident demonstrated the success of Federally-funded grant programs as applied to a local incident.

APPLICATION OF FUNDING WITH NATIONAL IMPACTS

The Tampa Bay Region has benefited from grant funding tremendously. This area has been extremely successful in applying grant-funded resources to real-life scenarios. The regional capacity-building that has taken place has required local, regional, State, and Federal law enforcement to provide common operating policies, exercise together, and develop a strong sense of mutual respect and appreciation for integrated emergency management in accordance with the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

Tampa has hosted four Super Bowls: Super Bowl XVIII (1984), Super Bowl XXV (1991), Super Bowl XXXV (2001), and Super Bowl XLIII (2009). In March 2005, the National Football League (NFL) awarded Super Bowl XLIII to the City of Tampa, Florida. Due to the magnitude of the event, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) designated Super Bowl XLIII as a Level I special event. The City of Tampa and regional partners undertook a range of measures to ensure that the Super Bowl event and its festivities were safe and secure.

The planning and execution of Super Bowl XLIII is notable for a variety of reasons, most importantly for its use of current assets and relationships to provide adequate security for a National event. Due to the unexpected economic downturn that occurred in 2009, the Mayor of Tampa mandated that no additional funds could be expended for Super Bowl XLIII. Considering that previous Super Bowl venues such as Glendale, Arizona spent nearly $12 million on Super Bowl purchases, this funding constraint could have presented an astronomical challenge. However, because of the 6 years of UASI funding that had been invested in the Tampa Bay region, the Tampa Police Department was able to lead the region in the push to use only grant-funded, available regional resources towards the Super Bowl event. As such, the City spent less than $1 million on the Super Bowl, and the majority of that amount was spent on overtime pay for law enforcement officers. The Tampa Bay Area was able to effectively utilize the grant-funded equipment and assets already in place within the region to the extent that new purchases were not made.

In today's world, hospitals play a major role in consequence management and are an important piece of Critical Infrastructure.

- Tampa General Hospital is the only Level I Trauma Center on the West Coast of Florida.
- St Joseph's Hospital and Bay Front Hospital are Level II Trauma Centers.
- All facilities are Tier 1 Response facilities.

Primarily the security upgrades included enhanced closed circuit television (CCTV) coverage and upgrading the existing systems to digital with alarm and event triggering. These upgrades were identified as a result of vulnerability assessments conducted by UASI in 2006.

These upgrades have allowed these facilities to have greater surveillance of their particular campuses. Strategically placing the cameras helps to help to prevent crimes and break-ins and also allow operators to watch for troubled patients and monitor for unauthorized visitors in restricted areas from centralized stations. Surveillance cameras can provide invaluable visual evidence for investigations of criminal activity and other specific events that have taken place within or around health care facilities.

Should a mass casualty event occur, the surge of patients could be overwhelming to a facility and require restricted access to allow for timely treatment of victims as well as additional protection measures. CCTV systems allow our trauma centers to quickly lockdown a facility and reduce the number of manpower necessary to monitor external entrances and other critical areas. By pinpointing exact locations

of an incident security protocol response time is dramatically reduced and patient/staff safety greatly enhanced.

As the Tampa Bay area hosts many major National events that draw very large crowds, the use of the CCTV systems has become a major factor in response and recovery plans for the health and medical system of the area. Major sporting, political, and entertainment events that attract large crowds all have the potential to become major mass casualty events. Planning for protection of our medical facilities is a key component of all response plans. These systems are used to monitor medical assets which have been permanently placed at some facilities as well as those that are temporarily staged in the area for a specific venue. For example, these systems received extensive use during the Super Bowl XLIII to monitor Federal medical assets from the Strategic National Stockpile at TGH and St Joseph's hospitals.

METROPOLITAN MEDICAL RESPONSE SYSTEM

The Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS) Grant Program provides funding to support the integration of emergency management, health, and medical systems into a coordinated response to mass casualty incidents caused by any hazard. Successful MMRS grantees reduce the consequences of a mass casualty incident during the initial period of a response by having augmented existing local operational response systems before an incident occurs.

The Tampa Bay MMRS and St. Petersburg MMRS were established within the region in 2000. The MMRS is an operational system at the local level that was put in place to respond to terrorist incidents and/or other public health emergencies that create mass casualties or casualties requiring unique care capabilities. The Tampa Bay and St. Petersburg MMRS Programs are fully integrated within their respective communities and provide the hospitals, public health responders and other emergency management personnel with critical training and pharmaceuticals. Because of the MMRS funding this region has received, health care providers, both individual and institutions, have become more organized and work cooperatively in planning, training, and exercises. This program has funded critical pharmaceutical stockpiles for emergency responders, standardized decontamination equipment, and training for all hospitals and continues to provide hospital training for Weapons of Mass Destruction.

The Tampa Bay Region recently sponsored a State-wide tabletop exercise for air medical resources. During the crisis that ensued during and after Hurricane Katrina, it was recognized that aeromedical resources were not efficiently and effectively integrated into the regional and Federal medical response for a disaster. This State-wide tabletop exercise was the first of its kind to address these critical issues, while paving the way for a coordinated medical response in our State. Meaningful collaborative training sessions would not have been possible without the much needed MMRS funding from the Federal Government.

The MMRS also supports the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) by providing qualified medical personnel from the throughout the State with the opportunity to volunteer during a disaster. Tampa has the largest MRC Program in the State of Florida. This dynamic program actively recruits current and retired medical professionals, as well as resident physicians from the University of South Florida. This program has received National recognition for their benchmark performance in to the Haiti Medical Refugee Mission. Without the MMRS Program, the coordinated response of all of the public and private health care partners could not individually accomplish what they can collectively as whole. By conducting a valid needs assessment, this area has been able to build a strong response system and team for the continuum of medical care. The support of the MMRS is critical to this region's medical response.

CONCLUSION

Homeland Security Committee Chairman Peter King put it very eloquently when he bluntly warned that new proposed cuts from port, transit, and urban security assistance amount to an "invitation to an attack." After all, are we trying to protect our citizens or hurt them? To cut grant funding to major cities is a horrible decision, but to cut grant funding to major cities before you even conduct a qualified threat assessment or analysis on use of past funding, is pure folly. Tampa Bay is a region that has a multitude of targets and vulnerabilities that if targeted, will have catastrophic impacts for a large sector of our population.

Super-sized, larger cities like New York and Washington, DC have experienced the horrible result of sadistic planning by terror cells, but we find consistently that the majority of planning is done in the medium- to large-sized cities, such as those that make up Tampa Bay, Florida. The truth of the matter is that we cannot to cut the funding that has been so useful, so vital for this entire region. If funding

is cut, then we will have no way to protect our residents who live, work and play among some of the country's most high-risk hazards and threats. Does a life in New York have more value than a life in Tampa Bay? No.

We recognize that we are not the size of a New York City or a Los Angeles, but we are just as inclined to protect our citizens. We do not feel the same sense of undignified entitlement that other cities do, so we put our heads together and work extra hard to make certain that every dime, every penny in grant funds that we receive is well accounted for and put to good use. It is our sincere hope and expectation, that the members of Congress will continue the efforts of Congressman Hansen Clarke by pushing forward the amendment to preserve grant funding for urban areas such as Tampa Bay, Florida.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you very much, appreciate it, thanks for the testimony.

Now we will call on Ms. Carbone. You are recognized for 5 minutes or so.

STATEMENT OF LINDA JORGE CARBONE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, TAMPA BAY CHAPTER & FLORIDA WEST COAST REGION, AMERICAN RED CROSS

Ms. CARBONE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Chairman Bilirakis and Ranking Member Clarke, thank you so much for having me today. I am honored to appear before you on behalf of the American Red Cross. My name is Linda Carbone, I am the chief executive officer of the Tampa Bay Chapter and Florida's West Coast Region of the American Red Cross.

For more than 130 years, our Nation has relied on the American Red Cross in emergency situations. The Red Cross provides shelter, food, clothing, emotional, and other support to those impacted by disasters in communities across the country and around the world. We supply nearly half of the Nation's blood. We teach lifesaving skills to hundreds of thousands of people each year, and we provide support and invaluable resources to the members of the military and their families. Whether it is a hurricane or a heart attack, a call for blood or a call for help, the Red Cross is there when America needs us.

The issue we are discussing today, "Weathering the Storm: A State and Local Perspective on Emergency Management," is very important to the Red Cross and particularly important to me and my colleagues serving around the State of Florida. As we marked the beginning of the 2011 hurricane season last week, we especially appreciate your attention to this subject and are very grateful to those colleagues and partners working together to help Florida prepare for this hurricane season.

I am sure you have read my remarks, so I will not go into them in detail, there is quite a bit of detail in there. But I would like to touch on some of the things that my colleagues have already talked about and in particular talk to you a little bit about the shelter situation and how important our community partnerships are in that and maybe some of the unique technologies that we use in social media and that type of thing.

The American Red Cross is chief in sheltering our citizens in these times of disaster. Shelters often become a focal point for the interaction between disaster victims and the community at large. Certainly my colleague from Alabama can agree with that. They are a place of safety, often a place of refuge and comfort. When a family or an individual walks through the door of a shelter either

operated or supported by the American Red Cross, they can expect food, a safe place to sleep, mental health support, functional and access services, and basic needs of health care and first aid. We do this in conjunction with our partners. It is very important that the Red Cross never does this alone, we do this in conjunction with our partners from FEMA, we do this in conjunction with our emergency partners. One of the things we are focusing on at that time is making sure that we are meeting all of the needs with regard to functional activities.

As we look at this issue with our partners across the State, we are doing things like making sure we are reviewing our shelters for accessibility, making sure our staff, our shelter staff—mostly comprised of volunteers, 90 percent of what the Red Cross does is actually done by volunteers—get the proper training so that we can make sure people are safe and comfortable in our shelters. It might be a small thing such as access points and how our shelters are actually set up that can make a really big difference to a community in making sure that they actually feel comfortable in our shelters. We are focused on training and we are focused on working with our community partners to make sure that these needs are met.

As my colleagues talked about, one of the many things that we are doing in a disaster, and really an important step, is using social media. What we have seen in our recent disasters, and certainly even in small disasters—we had nine tornadoes come through Florida on the 31st of March. What an important role social media can play. It is not just about getting our message out to the community, but it is also about listening. It is listening to what is happening in the community. One of the things we found is we need to make sure there is someone in our disaster operations center who is in fact listening to the social media channels, to the tweets that are going out, to Facebook sites and those types of things, so that when they are reporting areas of damage, we are sending our disaster assessment teams out there to make sure and to cover that as well.

We certainly saw the impact of social media first in the Haiti situation. Social media was the very first place where that information about what had happened went viral. It helped us certainly raise significant awareness and funds to help us be able to fund the response in Haiti and we are still there today.

Beyond that, social media is what the public expects of us in emergency response—69 percent of the public said they expect emergency responders to be monitoring social media sites and 74 percent said they expected people to come in less than an hour after they tweet or post a Facebook message about an emergency situation. Those numbers are staggering, and that means that we at the American Red Cross, a 130-year old organization, need to be very active in changes and very active in what we are doing to make sure that we are following it.

Certainly, in Haiti, we experienced a very heartbreaking situation where people were sending messages about needing assistance and we were able to communicate that to some of the responders first on the scene, but we are working hard with our emergency managers locally, through FEMA, we are working hard with an organization called Tweak the Tweet to make sure we are able to

share information with the State emergency operations centers and connect crisis social data with decision-makers who can act on it.

My closing remarks—my fellow Floridians and I are privileged to live in one of the most beautiful places in the world. But because our waterways can turn to destructive surge zones, because our winds can blow awfully hard, we also know it is an awesome responsibility to ensure that Florida is one of the most prepared places on the planet. I am confident that the plans, processes, and most importantly the partnerships, the people that are here today, that we have in place with our Federal, State, local, non-profit, and private sector partners will result in a proud and strong response from Red Crossers in this region and around the country.

Thank you so much for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions.

[The statement of Ms. Carbone follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF LINDA JORGE CARBONE

JUNE 10, 2011

Chairman Bilirakis and distinguished Members of the subcommittee, I am honored to appear today on behalf of the American Red Cross. My name is Linda Carbone and I serve as the Chief Executive Officer of the Tampa Bay Chapter and Florida's West Coast Region of the American Red Cross.

For more than 130 years, our Nation has relied on the American Red Cross in emergency situations. The Red Cross provides shelter, food, clothing, emotional, and other support to those impacted by disasters in communities across the country and around the world. We supply nearly half of the Nation's blood. We teach lifesaving skills to hundreds of thousands of people each year, and we support and provide invaluable resources to the members of the military and their families. Whether it is a hurricane or a heart attack, a call for blood or a call for help, the Red Cross is there when America needs us.

The issue we are discussing today, "Weathering the Storm: A State and Local Perspective on Emergency Management," is very important to the American Red Cross and particularly important to me and my colleagues serving in the State of Florida. As we mark the beginning of the 2011 Hurricane season last week, we especially appreciate your attention to this subject and are grateful to those colleagues and partners working together to help prepare Florida for this hurricane season.

Allow me to begin by saying this: The American Red Cross stands ready to respond to the 2011 hurricane season. We have reviewed and studied what we did well in the recent seasons, addressed any challenges, and improved upon our successes. Although we've been fortunate to avoid the impact of a tropical system on our soil in the past few years, we've gained valuable experience for our paid and volunteer staff by deploying them to disasters around the country, most especially the recent spring storms across much of the southeast. We have also taken a hard look at those areas where we must continue to improve our response and we've identified and addressed shortcomings. From a Florida tropics perspective, Tropical Storm Fay affected the majority of Florida counties in the 2008 hurricane season. Over 1,400 Red Crossers came to the aid of affected Floridians and the vast majority of those volunteers came from our Florida Red Cross Chapters. We opened 118 shelters with 21,224 overnight stays and 372,919 meals and snacks.

The American people can continue to rely upon the Red Cross to deliver our promise of neighbor helping neighbor. Our legendary corps of volunteers is well-trained and ready to help America. We are working closer than ever with our colleagues in the nonprofit, charitable, and faith-based communities to bring the message of preparedness to our communities and partner to coordinate the best response in times of emergency. We continue to improve our coordination with Federal, State, and local officials. Here in Florida, the partnership with State and County Emergency Management is very strong. From responding to single family fires to a major hurricane response, we keep our Emergency Management Partners informed and work alongside of them to serve disaster survivors.

We have been participating with our Federal, State, community, and faith-based partners in State-wide and risk area planning. Red Cross representatives at all levels have been involved in planning with concentration on mass care, sheltering, and

feeding, as well as family notification and reunification, post-disaster relocation, repatriation, update of the CEMP (Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan), case management, and evacuation workgroups.

I am very pleased to share with you today our perspective on emergency management, our plans for the coming season and our rejuvenated sense of urgency as we address our goals. The next disaster may occur with little or no warning, as we have seen too often these past few months with the terrible tornadoes throughout the South, the Midwest, and even Massachusetts last week. Florida has deployed over 450 trained volunteers and staff to these disasters since March 1, 2011. These folks not only serve their fellow man, they come back to Florida better prepared to respond to Florida events. I want you to know that we do not wait each year for June 1 and the start of hurricane season to be ready for disaster response. The American Red Cross remains on guard each day, every day.

AMERICAN RED CROSS SERVICES—WHAT WE DO IN TIMES OF DISASTER

Our citizens rely on the American Red Cross to provide comfort and care during an emergency. Floridians in particular know that the American Red Cross will be there to provide the basics of food, shelter, and a shoulder to lean on in times of disaster. But it is important to know the details of these services and I would like to take a moment to expand on them.

Sheltering.—Shelters often become a focal point for the interaction between disaster victims and the community at large. They are a place of safety, refuge, and comfort for many. When a family or individual walks through the door of a shelter operated or supported by the Red Cross, they can expect food, a safe place to sleep, mental health support, functional and access services, and basic first aid and health care. The Red Cross often uses congregate sheltering in facilities such as schools, churches, or other large facilities as shelters for individuals or families. Those shelters may be opened in anticipation of a disaster, during an evacuation, or after a disaster occurs. The Red Cross usually initiates sheltering activities in coordination with Government and/or emergency management or with other community organizations.

In Florida, we are prepared to support and manage safe Hurricane Evacuation Centers, which really serve as a lifeboat, bringing bring people out of harm's way as well as shelters where we provide the types of services listed above.

We coordinate our shelter operations with our Government partners. The State of Florida has adopted the American Red Cross National Shelter System as their official State Shelter Database. Subsequently, during a tropical event, through the Division of Emergency Management's website: floridadisaster.org, we are able to provide both responders and Floridians with a public site that can direct people to open shelters. In partnership with the Florida Department of Health, we also indicate any open Medical Needs shelters. We are committed to the important work of moving people out of the shelter environment and into transitional and long-term housing. This is where our communities truly depend on our partnerships with Federal, State, and local government.

Feeding.—In addition to feeding efforts at shelters, the Red Cross also meets this basic need through mobile distribution and fixed feeding sites in affected areas for people who cannot travel to a shelter, those who choose to stay in their homes, or those cleaning up after a storm. Emergency workers or other groups providing disaster relief need meals as well and the local chapter or disaster relief operation can provide feeding services to those groups. Mobile feeding is critical to meeting the immediate needs of affected communities and establishing the presence of Red Cross relief efforts. Red Cross workers drive through damaged neighborhoods delivering meals, snacks, and beverages to people returning to and cleaning up damaged homes.

Bulk Distribution.—In many disasters, essential items clients need to assist their recovery might not be immediately available in the local area. In such cases, the Red Cross distributes clean-up kits, shovels, insect repellant, sunscreen, toiletry items, or other things that may be needed. This may be accomplished through the establishment of fixed Emergency Aid Stations or mobile bulk distribution.

Disaster Mental Health Services.—Red Cross workers provide mental health services wherever a client is in need. Our mental health workers are present at shelters, feeding sites, and emergency aid stations. They also travel with our Integrated Care Teams including caseworkers, and console families at hospitals and in disaster-affected neighborhoods where clean up and rebuilding is taking place. Red Cross mental health volunteers are licensed mental health professionals and often work with practitioners in the community.

Client Casework.—Disaster victims often need the type of one-on-one advocacy our caseworkers can provide. In the complex world of disasters, it is often hard to know where to get help and how to start on the road to recovery. Red Cross caseworkers are skilled in matching a client's needs with the resources available in the community and then advocating on behalf of the client to access those resources. Caseworkers can also help their clients with wellness issues such as replacing lost medication or damaged medical equipment.

Safe and Well Information.—Red Cross workers help concerned family members communicate with their loved ones during an emergency. Within the disaster-affected area and through the use of tools like our Safe and Well website, the Red Cross helps individuals and family members to communicate with family and friends outside of the affected area.

Outreach to People With Disabilities.—In developing mass care and sheltering capacity throughout the community, the American Red Cross has made it a priority Nation-wide to ensure that services and shelters are as accessible as possible to people with disabilities, as well as functional and access needs. Our Red Cross chapters work closely with their local Centers for Independent Living offices on disability issues as well other expert organizations. To that end we have been taking a number of steps including:

- Reviewing all our shelters for accessibility.
- Participating on the Policy and Analysis working groups with our State partners to plan for Functional Needs Support Services in shelters.
- Working with other subject matter experts (including experts from FEMA, State Emergency Management, our State Disability Coordinator, and the State Department of Health) to identify specific items that need to be available in shelters to make them more accessible to people with disabilities. Based on those recommendations, we have pre-stocked accessible cots, shower stools, and commode chairs in some of our warehouses.
- *Focus on Training*.—
  - Providing training developed by the American Red Cross in conjunction with our State Disability Coordinator to Red Cross chapters, the Florida Association of Centers for Independent Living and local Emergency Management in order that they might be able to survey a building for accessibility and compliance with all ADA regulations.
  - With the Department of Health, Emergency Management, and Florida State University we are developing training for shelter workers on how to provide functional and access services to shelter residents. This training will be out in the next few months.

DIVERSITY ISSUES

We carefully analyze the demographics of our very diverse State in our response planning. From our training to our casework to public messaging, we offer materials in Spanish and much of it also in Creole. With our other chapter partners, we are working to coordinate and expand our language bank and other diverse language resources to be sure that we have the capacity to effectively communicate with those with limited skills in English.

GOVERNMENT, NONPROFIT, AND OTHER PARTNER COLLABORATION

In Florida, as is the case across the country, the American Red Cross staffs the State and local Emergency Operation Center(s) (EOC) with Red Cross Government Liaisons who collaborate with their Government and non-profit agency counterparts. This staffing provides a direct link between the Government agency most directly responsible for the event and the Red Cross and the resources that we can bring to support that Government agency.

The Red Cross takes a lead role in actively working with the local VOADs (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster), which are coalitions of voluntary agencies that meet regularly to ensure a coordinated community response that addresses the needs of victims and minimizes overlap of services in the event of a disaster.

To ensure effective disaster readiness and response, the Red Cross has established relationships with partner community agencies. While our National headquarters seeks out and negotiates partnerships with National-level agencies and organizations, our local chapters make those partnerships come alive by establishing and nurturing local relationships. Besides the VOAD partnerships, we look to AmeriCorps, CERT (Community Emergency Response Teams), the Florida General Baptist Association, the NAACP, and many other faith-based groups in times of disaster.

SOCIAL MEDIA: A NEW TOOL IN DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

The American Red Cross is a 130-year-old organization, and the tools we use to respond to disasters have evolved over the years. Perhaps the most exciting innovations are social technologies because they allow us to listen to and engage with the public as never before.

We saw this with our fundraising efforts during Haiti. When we rolled out our mobile giving campaign, Text HAITI to 90999, it was the social media community who took it viral. In the first 48 hours, there were 2.3 million re-tweets of our Text number as people sent it to their networks of followers. Before long, we had raised $32 million dollars via text—$10 at a time. And 42 percent of our text donors were under the age of 34.

We saw the same phenomenon with Japan. The earthquake happened at 2:47 a.m. east coast time in the United States, and in hours, our text number was trending on Twitter. Social media communities were already way ahead of us.

But new technologies are not just helping us fundraise; they are becoming part of our operational DNA.

In Haiti, we sent out 4 million text messages to Haitians about the symptoms of cholera and how to prevent and treat it.

Here at home, we have built a dynamic shelter map using Google maps to update our open shelter information. We provide this information to the public on our website and have built an iPhone app so people can find a shelter on their mobile phone.

We are also helping families connect in those first hours after disaster strikes through our Safe and Well website, where people can post their whereabouts and update their Facebook and Twitter status.

We are training Red Cross volunteers who deploy to disasters to use their smart phones and social media to let people know where they can go to find shelter, food, and other services. And we are creating a new digital volunteer role where volunteers can help us monitor, authenticate, and route incoming disaster requests without ever leaving their homes.

We know that in a crisis, people turn to the communications tools they are familiar with every day, and disaster response and relief agencies must do the same.

An American Red Cross survey last year found that more web users get emergency information from social media than from a NOAA weather radio, Government website, or emergency text message system. And not only are they seeking information, they are sharing it. One in five social media users report posting eyewitness accounts of emergency events. If someone else is in need, they are enlisting their social networks to help or using Facebook and Twitter to notify response agencies.

And, they expect us to be listening and responding.

- 69% said that emergency responders should be monitoring social media sites.
- 74% expected help to come less than an hour after their tweet or Facebook post.

These are very high expectations. But today, they don't match reality. Most disaster responders are still not staffed to monitor or respond to requests via social media during major events.

At the Red Cross, we experienced a heartbreaking situation after the earthquake in Haiti when we began receiving tweets from people trapped under collapsed buildings. We didn't have a good way to handle those pleas for help. We had to go through the messages manually and try to route them to the right places. In some cases, it was too late.

While we won't solve these issues today, we are making progress in collaboration with our partners as we're seeing in the spring storms. People affected by recent tornadoes are posting urgent needs at an on-line gathering point. Working with an organization called Tweak the Tweet, as well as with FEMA and Crisis Commons, we are able to share this information with the State Emergency Operations Centers and connect crisis social data with decision-makers who can act on it.

AMERICAN RED CROSS: READY FOR 2011

In our efforts to continuously prepare for the coming season, I am pleased to share our on-going efforts with you:

- *Supplies*.—We have expanded pre-positioning supply inventory to support feeding and sheltering for 500,000 people.
- *Technological Improvements*.—We have upgraded our IT systems to improve greater controls over financial management and can more easily share shelter and client information with our partners.
- *Improved Relationships*.—Our Disaster Field Structure is aligned by State and provides a point of contact and integration of plans with other Federal and State officials across the country. We rely upon this robust network to provide

field support, performance improvement, strategic project management, and Federal disaster relations.

- *Communications*.—We have pre-positioned communications equipment and supplies in 48 cities in high-risk States including Florida.
- *Logistics*.—We have built a more effective logistics supply chain and inventory control system and are more engaged with NORTHCOM, the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) and FEMA's logistics teams.
- *Volunteers*.—We have more than 80,000 people in disaster response database, 93% of which are volunteers.
- There are other improvements post-Katrina that will ensure improved response from the Red Cross to those we serve, including:
  - Creation of the National Shelter System;
  - Enhancements to the Coordinated Assistance Network (CAN);
  - Better coordination with other non-profit partners and agencies;
  - Refinements to the Safe and Well website;
  - Redesign of the Shelter Intake Form in conjunction with DHS to better evaluate health needs of shelter residents.

CLOSING REMARKS

My fellow Floridians and I are privileged to live in one of the most beautiful places in the world. But because our beautiful waterways can turn into destructive surge zones and our winds can be some of the hard and fastest in the country, we also know it is an awesome responsibility to ensure that Florida is one the most prepared places on the planet. I am confident that the plans, processes, and partnerships that we have in place with our Federal, State, local, non-profit, and private sector partners will result in a proud and strong response from Red Crossers in this region and around the country.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you very much, Ms. Carbone. You do wonderful work.

Ms. CARBONE. Thank you.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. All right, my first question—I will recognize myself for 5 minutes or so for questions. We will go back and forth, if that is okay with you.

Mr. CLARKE of Michigan. Yes.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. October marks—this is for all the witnesses, anyone that wants to respond—October marks the 5-year anniversary of the enactment of the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act. By all accounts, FEMA has made great strides—that is what I hear—since Hurricane Katrina, and today's FEMA is far more nimble and forward-thinking. I am interested in your assessment on FEMA's current capabilities. What is working well with FEMA, what is not working? How can we do better?

We are going to have a hearing this fall and I am going to question FEMA on these particular issues, so I welcome your input. What changes do you believe are necessary to further enhance FEMA's disaster preparedness on the response capabilities side?

Why don't we go ahead and start right here with Ms. Willis, if you would like to respond.

Ms. WILLIS. Well, here in the Tampa Bay area, we have not had to experience what the gentleman from Alabama has had to experience with FEMA. However, that being said, we rely on their support to be there should the need occur.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Absolutely.

Ms. WILLIS. We know that there have been a lot of changes to FEMA as a result primarily of Katrina, but several other instances where they were perceived as performing very poorly. Because of their willingness to listen, a lot of great strides have been made

and we anticipate that should anything occur in the Tampa Bay area, we can rely on their support.

We have been interacting with FEMA recently. They are going to provide us with technical support for any consequence management issues and hopefully we will not have the amount of casualties such as has been experienced in Alabama. Unfortunately, we are entering the hurricane season, so we are relying on FEMA to provide their expertise in that area as well.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you.

Ms. Carbone.

Ms. CARBONE. Mr. Chairman, you asked what FEMA is doing right, and I think one of the things they are really doing right is the partnership aspect. None of us stands alone in helping our communities recover and helping our communities when they need a safe place to stay. It is all about the partnerships. It is about the discussions you have before the storms, before they come, and it is about how you partner together. Certainly one of the things that the Red Cross has done in Alabama that has been very successful is a very close partnership with FEMA in sending a care team out to the community, so you have one place to go or that the people come to you, and it is getting them mental health assistance at the same time maybe that we are sending food out into a community or that type of thing. It is really about our citizens and the people who have been impacted by disasters getting the most assistance in the shortest amount of time. I think that is one place that we have really seen FEMA step up to the plate and improve. It is about those partnerships and the discussions that we have ahead of time about what everyone's role is, about what our capabilities are, about how we can meet the needs of citizens in their stressful time.

So I have very high confidence in FEMA's assistance in Alabama, and what I hear from my colleagues across the country as well.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Yeah, I noticed, Mr. Russell, you said that in your testimony as well. Can you elaborate on that? What was done well, can we learn from your experience?

Mr. RUSSELL. Yes, sir. One thing that we found right off the bat, 3 days into the storm, I had a FEMA liaison in my county and things started happening. That had not happened for a long time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. That made a huge difference, is that correct?

Mr. RUSSELL. It absolutely did.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. FEMA did not have a liaison in New Orleans, did they?

Mr. RUSSELL. Not in 3 days.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Go ahead, I am sorry.

Mr. RUSSELL. I worked Hurricane Ivan, Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Rita, Hurricane Gustav. This is the best response I have seen from FEMA. Seems like FEMA has a little bit more autonomy than they have had in the past. The people that came in were not inexperienced, they knew what they were doing, they knew what they needed to do. They are working well with the Corps of Engineers, something we had not seen before. I am really just impressed with them.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Smith, would you like to respond?

Mr. SMITH. Yes, sir. I will echo what everyone said, I do believe that they are making the changes that are necessary, that were requested, and why we had to have this legislation to reform. I do like the fact that they have qualified emergency managers and senior leadership. That is key, so that when I am talking to somebody, they understand exactly what I am talking about. It is not an appointment-type thing, political appointment. It is somebody that is actually qualified and has had some experiences in dealing with it.

On that point, the National response framework talks about having a principal Federal official for Incidents of National Significance and then you have the Federal coordinating officer under the Stafford Act. We saw significant challenges with that principal Federal official concept with Deepwater Horizon. Now, that is not FEMA's fault, that is the DHS' philosophy about how they wanted to go about doing that. We also recognize that some of these laws, some of the HHS things for the Haitian repatriation are not FEMA. FEMA does get involved with trying to help us coordinate things a little bit. But like the Deepwater Horizon, they were nowhere near. We were not dealing with the Stafford Act, so we were not dealing with that type of reimbursement philosophy, and that created some real challenges, specifically for all of us. FEMA is making those changes in the Stafford Act. I was very interested in what Mr. Russell was talking about, speeding up the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. We had to wait a year to get funding for a new emergency notification system. So we are excited about that, that is very good news.

I am glad to hear that he is talking about that they are leaving people in there, because one of the practices that FEMA had been using was disaster assistance employees. That I think goes back to a lot of the stuff about recoupment, where you had one person coming in and telling you one piece of policy and they were not trained as well as the next one that came in and said oh, no, you cannot do it that way. When you put the train in motion, it is kind of difficult to stop it. So being able to do that.

Like I mentioned before, I am very happy with the new training, I am excited to hear about the EM Academy, Emergency Management Academy. I would like to see how we can duplicate some of that and hoping that that will be duplicated at the local level. EMI is kind of far away for us to go and they are offering it over the summer, which there is not really anybody in Florida that can take the time off to complete that, but there are—I see progress.

Working with volunteers, their emphasis on the volunteers and the whole community. That is something that Craig had worked with us here in Florida on. You know, he had a strong relationship with Volunteer Florida and the VOAD here. So we have incorporated a lot of that already in Florida about how we are working that and working with our non-Governmental agencies and faith-based to pull them in, so I am happy to see that.

From the staff that I dealt with—Mr. Russell talks about a liaison in your county. I had Linda Lowe, she showed up that Friday—no, excuse me, it happened on Friday morning, she showed up Saturday. That was phenomenal. So bringing that person in and being able to talk directly to that FEMA liaison is very important.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Okay, thank you very much.

Does anyone else wish to respond here?

Ms. DRAGANI. I have a couple of comments I want to make about positive changes, but also a couple of cautions as well.

A couple of things FEMA has done recently that I think are very productive is they are really trying to get at how we measure outcome, how do we measure improvement, both with the Emergency Management Performance Grant and the Homeland Security Grant Program. That is not an easy task because how we do it in Ohio works in Ohio. It is going to be entirely different in Florida and it is going to be different at the local level. They are working very hard collectively on how do we get at measuring improvement and what does Congress, what does the American citizenry get for the dollars that we are spending in this program. I applaud FEMA for really diligently working on how we get there.

A couple of other things. We talked kind of around about this focus on bringing everyone to the table. Craig would say the whole of community, but bringing everyone to the table and making everyone part of the solution. One of the most important areas is bringing the private sector to the table as a true partner. Not as a "Wal-Mart, what can you give us?" but "Wal-Mart, what can we give back to you so that you can get your doors open faster and we get the community to recover faster?" It is a real sea change in the way historically the emergency management community has worked with our private sector partners.

They are leaning forward, I think that is evident in what we heard from Mr. Russell. They are really engaged in being there early and go big, go fast, get the boots on the ground, and then we can pull back—deploy fast and then correct as needed. That is also an important change I think in the speed of their response and the effectiveness of their response.

Then one last improvement that I think goes to what Mr. Smith said, for years the system of emergency management, the profession of emergency management kind of languished. Universities and colleges really view emergency management as a system, but internally to FEMA, EMI was not really a priority, training of both FEMA professionals as well as State and local professionals was also not a priority. FEMA is really intentionally taking a look at that. How can we grow the profession at all levels? They are looking at EMI, they are looking at embedding some of their own staff in State and local programs, because when you live it and you work it at the local level and State level, you will go back to Washington with a much better understanding of how you operate.

Final improvement, and then I do have a couple of cautions, the National Advisory Council, I am on my second 3-year appointment. The first 3 years were a little bit tough, we really did not know what the goal was, what the purpose was. But I just came back from Los Angeles from a meeting with the National Advisory Council and between FEMA's engagement and the Council itself, I think we are positioned now to really provide some advice and counsel to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Two quick cautions. In the effort to lean forward, FEMA needs to be careful about the down-range impact. Some of the effects that Mr. Smith's constituents are facing, that my constituents are facing, are the result of an effort to get money out fast post-disaster,

which is great until you are audited 6 years later and somebody determines that the money did not go out correctly and now we have to recoup the money from either Government or citizens. So making sure that we are looking at the entire effects of a program decision and not just how it will benefit us this year, but how it will affect us in 5 or 6 years, I think is a caution that I would have as we look at revamping these programs.

The final caution I would have, and I think Mr. Smith brought this up, is encouraging FEMA to continue to make sure that they are engaging State and local partners as they relook at these programs. Sometimes there is a motivation to get it done and we appreciate that, but they need to get it done in concert with their partners. They are good at that, but it is just a continuing request I think.

Thank you.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Koon, what improvements can FEMA make?

Mr. KOON. I think, first of all, they do have an excellent core of individuals there, qualified emergency managers, who are forward leaning and changing the paradigm from what we saw prior to Hurricane Katrina, ensuring that the right partners are engaged.

I think one recommendation I would have for improvement is something they have already embarked upon, which is ensuring that the processes that they utilize are appropriate. They have begun a bottom-up review of their recovery programs and some other programs as well, to ensure that they are meeting the needs without being overly bureaucratic or cumbersome.

While they have streamlined many of their processes on the response phase, we still have a way to go on the blue sky portions of the administration. They are in recovery and mitigation. Sometimes the appearance during audits and other program closeouts is that they are spending a dollar to track down a dime in those cases, and so we might want to take a look at those as well, to ensure that we are utilizing our scarce human resources appropriately in the agency.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Very good, thank you.

Next question and then I will turn to Hansen. Well, the Mayor is here, Mayor Hibbard from the City of Clearwater. Do you want to say a couple of words?

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE FRANK HIBBARD, MAYOR, CITY OF CLEARWATER, FLORIDA

Mr. HIBBARD. Thank you, Congressman. It is our great pleasure to have you here in the City of Clearwater. Nice to see you again. We appreciate you coming here.

Obviously we are at heightened awareness right now as we have entered hurricane season here. We are always trying to make certain that our citizens are prepared. We get a little bit lax when we have not had landfall of a storm in so many years. So that is always a challenge for us, but we have wonderful emergency managers in our area and also in our State.

So I appreciate the fact that you are having this hearing and continuing to focus on best practices. I can tell you in 2004, we did have a very positive experience with FEMA as we were being reimbursed for much of the clean-up from Charlie that we experienced.

But I think it is critically important that we keep our eye on the ball and not just for hurricanes but all natural disasters.

Sorry I was not here to greet you at the beginning of the meeting, we had a groundbreaking for our aquarium, which is a big deal for our city. You will be seeing it in a major motion picture called "Dolphin's Tale," about a dolphin and if you have kids, you are going to be going to the movie, I can guarantee it. But it will be coming out in September starring Harry Connick, Jr. and Kris Kristofferson and Morgan Freeman, Ashley Judd. So it is going to be a great hit and it is going—unfortunately, Clearwater is featured in it and there is a hurricane in the movie, which we have not had one here, a direct hit, since 1921, but we will deal with the rest of the publicity. We think it is a great thing.

But thank you for all your work, we certainly appreciate your diligence and are appreciative of you having this hearing here in Clearwater.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you for all your good work as well.

Mr. HIBBARD. God bless.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. God bless you.

On that topic, how can we better engage the public in developing a culture of preparedness? Why don't we start on this side, please.

Ms. DRAGANI. I had an epiphany watching the former FEMA administrator, watching a YouTube video that Dave Paulison did and some of you may have seen it, where he walked around his house and showed a full pantry and talked about how his wife restocked the pantry on a regular basis so that he had 3 days worth of food. He showed the hurricane shutters in his garage and where he kept the duct tape and the plastic and all of the things that he needed to prepare. It caused me personally to rethink some of the messages we give our public. I think we need to take a look at what we are telling the public to do and determine whether or not we are asking them to do things that make sense in today's culture, that people can afford to do, that people can do realistically and legitimately so that we can actually move the needle on how people are preparing and how many people are preparing.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you very much. Anyone else want to comment on that? Yes, sir.

Mr. KOON. Mr. Chairman, there are several things we can do. I think one of the primary things that we can do to help encourage a more prepared public is to help, as Ms. Dragani said, set the expectations. Help them understand what is actually going to occur or what could occur during a disaster. Help them understand the process that goes on in getting food, water, other lifesaving commodities to an area. Also, help them understand the cost involved with that, that this is not raining from the sky, this is a substantial cost to Government and other entities involved with that. I think that the process that FEMA has undertaken with the whole community will help us get there.

I think we should approach it in a positive way so that citizens understand how they can contribute to the overall success after a disaster and response effort, empower them to help take care of their friends and neighbors who may not be able to take care of themselves.

I think we should continue to re-evaluate where we are as a society with regard to preparation. I had the occasion yesterday to meet with representatives from the Taiwanese National Fire Association, an extremely prepared nation, but one whose apartments do not lend themselves well to maintaining a gallon of water per person per day. So we should take a look at those other cultures, other societies, to see how they are preparing and help to understand how we can utilize those messages in Florida and across the Nation.

Finally, I think we need to ensure that we change up our tack when we talk to citizens about preparedness. You know, we hammer them over the head, at least I do, time and time again with prepare, prepare, prepare. The CDC recently came out with here is how you prepare for a zombie attack. Which got the message across but in a slightly humorous way and allowed people to think about it in an outside-of-the-box way. So I think we should continue to make sure that we evaluate the way in which we give messages to the public.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you. Anyone else? You are recognized, Ms. Carbone.

Ms. CARBONE. Thank you very much.

The message of preparedness is something the Red Cross does every single day, and it is so very important, you cannot be too scared tactic. We have done the same YouTube video of what you have in your house that you can get together in your emergency kit and it is a continuing message that honestly the public needs to hear in stereo sound, which is one of the reasons I am so grateful that you have this hearing today, because it has to come from all different sectors. Certainly the Red Cross can be a good partner in that. It is also important who we are reaching. One of the things we do as the Red Cross is continually message to our youth. The zombie campaign is something that was really clever and cute as well. But getting our youth involved, maybe even in a school setting, so that we are talking to them about preparedness and giving them messages that they can bring home, homework for their parents, as it were, that they can do together as a family. It does not have to be super expensive, you can use a lot of things you have in the house. Maybe there is a list that you can go through and add one extra thing in your grocery cart every week for a few weeks or something like that.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Great suggestion.

Ms. CARBONE. The key is really just to be consistently on that message and to give it every chance that we can about being prepared in the community. What we recognize is the more prepared our community is, the more resilient our community is going to be. It is no single entity's responsibility, it is all of us together coming forth, being as prepared as we can.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Very good. Anything further?

Mr. RUSSELL. Yes, sir.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. You are recognized.

Mr. RUSSELL. In Alabama, we have a program called "Be Ready Camp for Kids." It is at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville every year. We train about between 300 and 500 kids every year, they are fifth-graders. We bring them in there and they

go through the CERT training, they learn first aid, they learn everything about how to respond, even a little bit of disaster psychology. They end with an exercise, they actually have pyrotechnics out there and the kids, you know, they have moulaged victims. In our community, we provide about 100, 120 volunteers who go out and shadow the kids as they are going through this exercise. The thing is they are fifth-graders. I remember when I was a kid we had "Duck and Cover" and everybody that lived back in that time knows what I am talking about. It was in the schools, it was taught, it was part of the curriculum and we were prepared. Thank God, we never had to do any of that, but we were prepared to do that. It is not part of the society today, preparedness is not part of our culture and we need to bring that back.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Absolutely. Yes, sir.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. I think one of the things, as you mentioned in your opening remarks, about the changes in what we have seen, Congressman Clarke, in the *Newsweek* article. We see that it seems as though Mother Nature is angry and that will get the attention of the public. One of the things that Craig started here in Florida and that we have incorporated is changing the mindset of do not refer to people as victims, refer to them as survivors. A survivor gives you the mental stimulus that you will get through whatever it is that happened to you, and that you are a survivor and you can make it. So that gives you that psychological edge to get through that.

The other thing is, you know, on the local level, I work on my local elected officials. Any time that they can get into the newspaper or they get in front of the media, any time they are talking about something, even when they are talking about economic development. You know, we talk about—the Small Business Administration will talk about the number of small businesses that will never open up again if they are not prepared and are closed during a disaster. So we have got to work on that type of thing when we do bring the businesses into the community, and yes, we have got to have the big stores or the big suppliers. But I need mom and pop because I need mom and pop to be working and back to work so that they can generate revenue to keep our local economy going. So that is one of the things we push on, is to work with our business incubators locally to try to get them to be involved with what is going on too.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you very much.

I will now ask the Ranking Member if he has any questions. You are recognized for the same amount of time that I used.

Mr. CLARKE of Michigan. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks for the equal treatment. You know we Democrats do not usually get that in the House of Representatives.

[Laughter.]

Mr. CLARKE of Michigan. But here on this subcommittee, I do, so thank you again.

My questions are really for anybody. The Emergency Management Performance Grants, have many of your communities had a tough time meeting that 50 percent match? Is that an issue?

Mr. SMITH. In Florida, sir, we have, as we mentioned the Emergency Management Preparedness Assistance Trust Fund. We are

able to be able to utilize that as a global match most of the time. However, the locals do have problems with that. We have seen a reduction in the local general fund allocation across the State. However, in the EMPA, that is because it is non-Federal revenue, we are able to be able to meet those matches, so luckily we have not had that specific issue although there are counties that have had maybe return some EMPA money to the State for reallocation because of budget cuts and they were not able to meet—they were not allowed to spend that, as a reduction process within their own community.

Mr. CLARKE of Michigan. Your trust fund is through a fee on insurance policies?

Mr. SMITH. Yes, sir, on your homeowner's insurance, there is a $10.00 fee and then for business insurance policies, a $4.00 fee. However, we are struggling with that quite a bit with the Department of Revenue because the allocation has not changed since 1994. We have grown just a little bit more in Florida since 1994, so I imagine there are a few more insurance policies that have been written.

Mr. CLARKE of Michigan. Do you know just roughly how much is raised in that area?

Mr. SMITH. Probably about $15 million a year.

Mr. CLARKE of Michigan. Do any of you have any thoughts if we should have a Federal dedicated public source? Do not worry about the policy.

Ms. WILLIS. Okay, great. I would agree with that. I think realistically the match is somewhat of a hardship, especially in these economic times. For the most part, I know with the City of Tampa, if the grant match is too large, we are not allowed to even go after the grant. Now that could be supplemented by partnerships with the private sector and in-kind funding. However, the realism of it is, just to be honest, is that match is too great, and that is just the way it is.

Ms. DRAGANI. If I could offer a dissenting opinion. Ohio shares many of the same challenges that Michigan has right now. Yes, we have had probably a third of our 88 emergency management, county emergency management agencies, have a difficult time meeting the match. We have been able to reallocate that to other counties that can.

The challenge, and I surveyed our county emergency managers a couple of years ago when it became evident that doing it with the local budget was going to be a problem, and asked them about whether it would be helpful to them if we picked up more of their match in a short-term fashion, to allow them to continue to receive the allocation. What my emergency management directors told me in Ohio was that to do that would long-term—it would have a long stream impact—they would lose their local funding because the local government tendency would be we do not have to fund that 50 percent any more. So there was real concern that if we reduce the 50/50 match, they will lose that attendant responsibility on the local level, and their budgets will decrease, it will be very difficult to get that 50/50 match back.

So I guess I would offer that somewhat dissenting concern.

Mr. SMITH. No, no. We work the same way, when we take a reduction on the general fund, there is a formula, but if it meets a certain formula, we have to get a waiver from the State for them to be able to do that. That was written into the administrative rules years ago just because of that. Yes, I have last 2 years had to get a waiver. However, the ability—that is a concern we have, but I do use that. I go, "Hey, wait, wait, wait, I get this Federal money and I have to have this dollar-for-dollar match." So in the budget negotiations with the county manager, it does come in, it is very helpful to have that requirement.

But I think your question was to find a specific funding source?

Mr. CLARKE of Michigan. That was one of my questions, yeah. I was looking at if we should look at a Federal dedicated funding source for EMPG. You know, especially in light of the fact that our needs may be dramatically more in the next couple of years. I see your point about having some type of maintenance or effort by the locals, but I wanted to get your advice on if we on the Federal side should look at a different way of funding EMPG and actually broadening the scope of that, either how it functions or in actual dollars.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Russell.

Mr. RUSSELL. I think the EMPG should be separated from the Homeland Security Grants. That is the first step.

Mr. CLARKE of Michigan. I hate to interrupt you, but NEMA has also mentioned that as a recommendation. So I am just curious, what is the concern there?

Mr. RUSSELL. Every year, the administration—or at least for the past few years, the changing administrations have always recommended a cut in EMPG. Congress has managed to actually enhance EMPG, which has helped us a lot. The 50 percent match is the demonstration of the partnership. It is how the locals earn their part of the money. It is a spirit of partnership. Remember, it has been around for 50 years and it started out as a 50/50 match—State 25, local 25, Feds 50. That was a program approach and it has lasted for 50 years. I really do not think that a change in it would be beneficial right now.

However, to mix it in with all the other homeland security grants, there is a danger that eventually it will lose its identity. When it loses its identity, it is going to change what it is doing now.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Smith, you wanted to add something?

Mr. SMITH. Yes, sir. The danger of having—and we fight this constantly sir, because we have the trust fund. The danger of having that—well, first off, it is extremely challenging. We were very fortunate that the Florida Insurance Council was not opposed to the idea. So that helped us a great deal.

Mr. CLARKE of Michigan. Yes, it did.

Mr. SMITH. They are a great partner of emergency management. The other thing is that when you do get that dedicated funding source, you become a target and you are evaluated constantly for that. There are others that when they come in—and that is the way our great republic works, is elected officials change and elected officials have different views on different things. We just recently in Florida had to deal with our trust fund being rolled completely

into the general fund and being allocated a different way. The legislature saw the plight and decided not to go that way. However, that is some of the challenges we face with a dedicated funding source.

I would highly encourage you, as NEMA, IAM, FEPA and I can guarantee you almost every other State EM association would say EMPA has to remain separate and I believe your committee was very involved in making sure that that occurs. Thank you.

Ms. DRAGANI. To quickly add NEMA's perspective, and it really follows on to what Mr. Smith and Mr. Russell said. EMPG again is a 50/50 match. It allows us at all levels of government to fund people. Without the funding to be able to pay the salaries of the emergency managers at the State and local level, we do not have emergency management programs at the State and local level. That program also in turn is primary in administering things like the Urban Area Security Initiative grants, the Homeland Security grants, many of the other programs that come through other funding sources. So the emergency—if we do not have EMPG, I would suggest we do not have an emergency management system in the Nation, or with significantly—significantly—decreased capabilities Nation-wide. It is really critical I think to the community that that program remain separate and it be allowed to do what it does currently.

Mr. CLARKE of Michigan. This is my last one. Many of you mentioned about the role of the private sector——

Mr. BILIRAKIS. We will do another round.

Mr. CLARKE of Michigan. Oh, okay. The role of the private sector, whether it be for-profit or non-profit. My background, I used to work at the local county level in the bowels of the bureaucracy in acquisitions and purchasing. So that is why I always consider being a bureaucrat something that is not negative.

I signed purchase orders for 6 years and also too, I understand how elected officials sometimes do not understand the importance of having clear procedures that are out there.

Do you have any thoughts collectively on how FEMA can encourage the type of innovation that the private sector could provide FEMA as contractors or other partners? Ms. Dragani, do you see a role of the private sector in being able to offer innovation in how we respond to these disasters; and if so, second, how can FEMA best encourage it if you do not think they are doing that right now?

Mr. KOON. Yes, sir, I believe they are encouraging it and I think we saw that start after Hurricane Katrina when both DHS and FEMA formed the private sector office. In my previous role at Wal-Mart, I had numerous and frequent engagements with both of those private sector offices. I hosted numerous Federal officials at Wal-Mart, at both our home offices as well as at our distribution centers and stores, so that they could benchmark how we were doing things.

I think the best way to spur that innovation is to encourage FEMA to think like the private sector does, to think about streamlining their processes as much as possible, eliminating waste, and trying to return to normalcy quickly after an event. One of our goals as emergency managers is to put ourselves out of business as quickly as possible. We do not want to be the ones out there deliv-

ering food and water, we do not want to be the ones sheltering and housing people. We want the community to get back to operation as quickly as possible.

The way that communities operate on a day-to-day basis, every single day, relies heavily upon the private sector. So in order to help replicate that, we want to think like they do and ensure that we are not adding steps into the process that should not be there, that we are streamlining as much as possible. Wherever possible, not trying to replicate or duplicate something that is already being done out there.

So I think probably one of the best ways that FEMA can innovate is simply working with the private sector, working with businesses to give them that information to get them up on-line as quickly as possible, to prepare them ahead of time and help them understand the importance of preparedness, utilize the communications channels that they already have with their employees and with their customers to spread that message of preparedness. Then in the response phase, working with them to get the information so they can come back up on-line as quickly as possible, get people back to work, restore the tax base in that community, and then basically get things back to as normal as they can as quickly as possible.

Mr. SMITH. On that point, we have Florida statutes and as you know, there are Federal procurement guidelines that really prevent—and it also goes back to what Bryan said about spending a dollar to chase a dime. You know, FEMA is somewhat bound—their hands are tied because of Federal procurement rules, plus, you know, they have processes where they will say—debris collection is a perfect point. They want you to have a contract in place prior to the event. However, in my local state of emergency, I suspend my normal process for following all those rules. So let us just say I could not get a better price when I am at that 7 days before my state of emergency, suspending my rule. There is also the questions of—and hopefully they are working through these at FEMA about well, why did you buy that? I am going to use Craig's comment and it is one he used quite a bit after the 2004 storms when he testified before Congress. "It seemed like the right thing to do at the time." But that does not work for those people that come in to work closeouts or to review our FEMA—for FEMA's review of our expenditures. So there is that question and that is one of the things we need to work with them on. I know that coming from local government, I know their hands are tied on some of the things that they have to do. The Stafford Act requires them to do a lot of different things. So that is a challenge that we have. I would love to see some innovation and be able to work through some things, but my hands are tied on the local level. You know, I cannot go to a preferred vendor until I go out—depending on the price of it—go out and get a request for bids or request for quotes. I cannot get any construction company or any architect until I go out and do that, regardless.

Mr. CLARKE of Michigan. Is that because of your State and local rules?

Mr. SMITH. Right. Then FEMA says did you follow your State?—and different things like that. So there are some challenges.

Mr. CLARKE of Michigan. So how about if we gave you flexibility from your own State and local rules, procurement rules, in certain situations?

Mr. SMITH. I imagine that would be helpful. I think we would have to work with the AG's office on how we would be able to do that.

Mr. CLARKE of Michigan. You know, the other concern we have, in an emergency situation, vendors will jack up the price and that type of thing, so we have to safeguard. But what you are saying is if you had the flexibility to work quickly, contract quickly, you would be able to get a better job done?

Mr. SMITH. Well, yes, but going back, you have got to be careful about not just what satisfies us right now, but where we are at 5 years when we go through the audit. So that is some of the things we will have to look at.

Ms. WILLIS. Not to interrupt, but I think there is a huge benefit in keeping the process formalized in terms of entering contracts. We are able to negotiate the costs ahead of time, which avoids litigation on the back end. So that benefits us to have those purchasing contracts for feeding, for anything that might be needed—for personal care, showers, whatever, all those things are negotiated ahead of time and that benefits not only the municipality but the county and I imagine the State as well.

Mr. CLARKE of Michigan. One question. Which level of government contracts, is it the local——

Ms. WILLIS. Each one.

Mr. CLARKE of Michigan [continuing]. Or the State?

Ms. WILLIS. Each one. City of Tampa has its own contracts and Hillsborough County has its contracts, the State has its contracts. If you imagine during Katrina what would have happened if all of the parishes shared the same vendors. That would have been an issue, right? They would have been struggling, I need them for this, we need them for that. They only have 25 front-end loaders; who gets them? So it benefits all of us to maintain separate contracts, because when a disaster happens, we do not want to argue over limited resources. Post-disaster, we do not want to come back and have all of these issues with improper spending or price gouging.

Mr. CLARKE of Michigan. Thank you.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you. You will be recognized again for a second round.

Mr. CLARKE of Michigan. I believe Mr. Koon has something.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Oh, yeah, you would like to make a comment on that.

Mr. KOON. Just two brief ones. I believe that the fear of price gouging after an event probably far outweighs the actual occurrence of it. I think you will find that the vast majority of businesses that are involved in that situation want to do the right thing and will not use it to take advantage of the situation.

The second piece of it, there is an inherent cost of doing business with Government as a Government contractor, becoming involved in these types of situations. If you walked up and down the street right outside this building, you would find that the majority of

businesses have no interest whatsoever in dealing with the Government.

[Laughter.]

Mr. KOON. Frankly, because it is too much of a headache and would cost them a fortune to do so. So we truly want to pursue a whole community effort in this and work on restoring these communities as quickly as possible. You have got to meet them on their terms, not try to get them to come to Government's terms when it comes to procuring their goods and services.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you. Anyone else?

[No response.]

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Okay, I have a couple of questions.

This question is for Ms. Carbone. Last month the Red Cross announced the Ready Rating Tool—I know you brought it up a little bit—to assist schools and businesses in their efforts to enhance their preparedness for natural disasters and terrorist attacks.

What has the response been like and then also have the schools cooperated? Do we have any schools in the Tampa Bay area that, or businesses, that participate, in the Tampa Bay area? If you know, maybe the Detroit area as well.

Ms. CARBONE. The Ready Rating Program, Mr. Chairman, came out of a successful program that our St. Louis Chapter is working and so it has a long history of success.

Basically, for those who are not familiar with it, it is an on-line tool now that a business or a school system can go on and rate your readiness to prepare for emergencies and respond to emergencies. It is a tool for businesses and also for schools. It has been very well received and what we have really tried to do over the past about year or year-and-a-half at the Red Cross is making it an easy tool to use, so that it is very—it is on-line now and it is a simple thing to do and it gives you specific suggestions. If you want to remain part of the Ready Rating Program, it may tell you, let us say for instance for your business, that you are at a certain level of readiness, but if you have four or five more employees that are trained in CPR or something like that, that you could meet that next level.

It is a bit of a challenge to get it into our school systems here in Florida. Obviously they are very, very focused right now on meeting EPCAP requirements and those types of things. Although we have a similar program, which does meet curriculum, there is just a lot of pressure right now on our school systems. So what we are really trying to do in our school systems is work with them to bring the message to our youth and be able to do it that way. We do not have a particular school system in place. We do have a number of businesses that have expressed an interest in Ready Rating. There are local leaders at Coca-Cola and others in Florida that we have worked with and that are looking at it. They made the first step, they approached the American Red Cross to train some of their employees on CPR, that type of thing.

But looking at it holistically as a business really is just taking that next step, taking that next step of preparedness. It is a great program, we are really hoping to get some muscle and meat behind it this year and really bring everyone's attention to it.

I appreciate, Mr. Chairman, that you became aware of it and I think it is a great tool for us to really use to start people thinking

about preparedness. Even more important, what is that next step concretely that I can take as a business to get my business prepared, as Mr. Koon mentioned, being able to come back and if you are more prepared for the emergency up front, you will be able to come back quicker. Then maybe also beyond that, it is about allowing your employees volunteer time so that they can get the information that they need and be out there in some of our volunteer communities and things like the American Red Cross.

So it has met a lot of success around the country and we are hoping to really ramp it up further and be able to take those next steps with it in our communities.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you. If we can be helpful, please let us know. I am sure Congressman Clarke would be helpful as well.

Ms. CARBONE. Thank you.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Administrator Fugate—this is for the entire panel to respond—has provided more authority to the 10 FEMA regions in an effort to decentralize the organization and make it more responsive. That is the key, that is the bottom line. Has this decentralization been effective, first? What changes, if any, would you recommend to maybe further strengthen FEMA's regions?

Who would like to respond first?

Ms. DRAGANI. I can start.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. You are recognized.

Ms. DRAGANI. Region V out of Chicago supports both Ohio as well as Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Certainly some of the devolution, if you will, that FEMA has done from the National to the regions has been very productive. The disability coordinator, we did not have one previous to this. We have legal counsel in the region, which is important, there are legal counsel for each State. I think that it is a work in process, I do not think they are done yet. But certainly from a National Emergency Management Association perspective, we applaud their efforts to create—to push as much of the authority down to the regional administrator and his or her staff as possible. They are making strides to do that.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Okay. Tell me why?

Ms. DRAGANI. Because the people in Chicago and Illinois have a much better understanding of the issues that face our region than somebody who has never lived in the Midwest. This really came up with the snow a couple of years ago and there was a new snow policy. Many of the people at FEMA were not from snow States, so they did not get it, they did not understand it, they did not think it was an issue. Then we had snowmageddon in Washington, DC and all of a sudden, snow became an issue that people could embrace.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Right.

Ms. DRAGANI. So I think just having people in the region that actually understand the issues that are facing Michigan and Ohio and Indiana is really beneficial as we start to talk about the issues that impact us and you begin to develop plans, exercises, and training on a regional basis.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Makes sense to me.

Mr. Koon.

Mr. KOON. Congressman, I concur with Ms. Dragani. I would also add that the frequency of the interaction we have with the people at FEMA Region IV, which is our FEMA region, allows them to fully understand what our issues are. We can also engage them in our training and exercise program so that when the time comes, they know everybody on our team.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Anyone else? Yes, sir.

Mr. RUSSELL. I think for the most part, what they have done so far has been transferring to the local level. However, I do know that these changes are necessary because we do not always have the devastating type of disasters in Alabama, sometimes we have a borderline when we have a touchdown, and the approval for the declaration can take up to a month, you know, rather than a few days. I think that more authority at the regional level will help expedite that, especially if it is not declared and there is an appeal process. That can take too long, because it goes to Washington and some black hole up there handles it.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Yes, sir.

Mr. SMITH. I will echo what Bryan said about the relationships or the contact, building those relationships. That is one of the most important things in emergency management, is having the relationships with the players so that we are not, as the saying goes, exchanging business cards during the disaster.

What I have personally experienced for an appeal on an HMGP project, we went right up to the Region IV director and it was approved, came right back down. We were looking at—for our emergency operations center, we were looking at modifying our contract, they sent an individual down from Atlanta, went over it with us, with the local office, and approved it right there on the spot. So that was huge, to be able to have that so I could move forward quickly with our project at the local level. So I was very appreciative of that.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Anyone else?

[No response.]

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Okay, Mr. Smith, I have a question for you. I know you briefly touched upon this, but we have discussed this issue in the past and I have discussed this with my locals as well. I have been contacted by emergency management officials from around the country, as a matter of fact, who are concerned about FEMA's Functional Needs Support Services Guidance and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act for emergency sheltering, an issue you raised, of course, in your testimony. All of us share the goal of ensuring all populations are considered and accommodated during disaster response—no question.

How have you worked to address the various functional needs of your constituents? As you plan your emergency shelter operations, what challenges have you faced in addressing this issue? You talked about the long-term shelter as opposed to the short-term 72-hour shelter. I know Mr. Russell probably wants to comment on this too. What assistance have you received from FEMA and from the Department of Justice? I have spoken with the Department of Justice on this issue. When do you anticipate you will convene the hurricane sheltering risk summit that you talked about? I hope you

will inform us of the results of the summit too, because I would like to know.

Mr. SMITH. Yes, sir, actually we will probably invite one of your staff members.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Please. Maybe I could attend as well.

Mr. SMITH. Sure, that would be great.

What we have done in Lake County and what people are doing across the State is they are looking at what they currently do and how they can easily make some accommodations. Things like if they provide a TV at their shelter, make sure that the TV can use closed captioning. If they do not provide TVs, if they can provide an interpreter or an American sign language interpreter, work through that. However, that is extremely challenging to do because typically the people that want to provide that service, want to leave the area also for an evacuation.

We are working to try to use the American Red Cross translation. They have a big billboard trifold card that they can point to and work through those different things. That is not just for people that are unable to talk, but it is also for language barriers, things of that nature.

In Florida, we have already had pet-friendly shelters. However, we recognize service animals and we have been able to try to make accommodations for those service animals.

So the challenges that we have are: (1) That it really kind of caught us by surprise, this document that came out. I recognize that Florida DEM had a representative, I like Chip Wilson, does a great job. Chip is the disability coordinator. We did not see an emergency manager on that process. Florida has a dynamic and very robust sheltering system. We are—we shelter all the time, we practice it. American Red Cross partners are there with us constantly. As I explained in my opening remarks, we shelter three-quarters of the State or can shelter a third of the State at one time, just depending on what the trajectory of the storm is.

So in discussions—just last month was the Governor's Hurricane Conference and FEMA staff came down and DOJ staff came down and the representatives from the organization that crafted—took administrative responsibility for putting the document together—came in to provide training. One of the challenges that occurred in that training was that they tried to stop us from using the term "Special Needs." That is a problem in the State of Florida because Florida Statute 252, which is the emergency management statute, specifically says you will have a Special Needs program. I am responsible for having a Special Needs registry in my county. Also, my review of the Post-Katrina Act showed that Special Needs is a term that was used within their Act. So we had some frustration with that.

It was a great conference, we had a lot of dialogue with FEMA representatives and it really came to a point where we recognized that their understanding of risk or hurricane sheltering is non-existent. What they are talking about doing for a post—how it is going to work for a post-shelter, we are in agreement. We believe that we can work through very easily on a post-sheltering, probably 72 hours after a hurricane event, we can work on getting those things accomplished.

However, you are talking about sheltering, starting sheltering maybe 2 days or a day before and then sheltering is a mentality of grouping and herding and putting all the people together as best they could.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. It is to save lives.

Mr. SMITH. Yes, sir, it is to save lives, not to actually—because our standards are that we follow with American Red Cross, you talk 20 square feet per person and if the wind is really blowing, you go down to 10 square feet. So there needs to be work with the Americans with Disabilities Act advocates to explain those issues to them and to work with them on that.

I completely agree that there needs to be provisions and people need to have that access. They should not be denied it at all. However, we need to work to make sure that we can be able to provide that legitimately. An example I use is there is an individual that comes in and we need to make the accommodation to provide them a cot at the shelter. We do not provide cots in Lake County and the majority of counties do not provide cots for hurricane sheltering. It is a place to hide for a certain period of time, 12 to 18 hours, from the wind. All right? So then I have a family of four sitting there and the mother is pregnant and she sees an individual is getting a cot because they qualify for the ADA accommodation. So whose rights am I violating, you know? That is some of the discussions we are trying to have with DOJ.

In Florida, we have seen that the Department of Justice has had completely inconsistent rulings on settlements with different—City of Fort Meyers, roughly 100,000 people. Their settlement with DOJ was they only had to have one shelter that met the FNSS criteria. Fairfax County, Virginia, the most populous county in Virginia, they only had to have one. So we cannot figure that out. They are in negotiations with Broward County, there is a requirement for air conditioning. They told Broward County that all of their shelters had to have air conditioning, but just on the other side of the State is the City of Fort Meyers, they only had to have one that did.

An example of the cost of that, Florida put generators in shelters across the State of Florida, put 56 of them in shelters, that were large enough to run the air conditioning, because our shelters are at schools. There is a law that says they have to build the schools to a certain protection level. Schools use central energy plants for cooling, so you have to have a big generator. For 56 sites, it cost over $77 million. So the cost there is significant to be able to provide that. We cannot just go buy a little air conditioner window unit or something like that to stick in there, because again, I do not know who I need to be able to provide that service to. They said I need to be able to provide it for anyone that would show up to our shelter. I do not know who is going to show up to our shelter.

So there is the frustration in just being able to work through these issues. I know we can resolve them. I know we can work with the experts on the ADA disability side of this and to be able to work and come to a common goal. That is why I said that we want to work on having the summit. More than likely, sir, it will probably be the November time frame because, as you know, August, September and October are our three busiest months for hurri-

canes. So we will have to bide our time to be able to work through that, but we are working with the Florida Division of Emergency Management and the Florida Department of Health. We have created two committees, one is a policy committee to work through and develop policies. Right now, we are looking at working on developing policies for post sheltering, because that is the most realistic.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Post sheltering is——

Mr. SMITH. Post-hurricane; yes, sir.

Mr. BILIRAKIS [continuing]. Katrina-type sheltering.

Mr. SMITH. Yes, sir, after the storm. It is not like you saw in the Super Dome because that was a refuge of last resort. But this would be for such as like Alabama or like we had with Groundhog Day. Then we are trying to do a gap analysis of what resources are available. There are groups working on gap analysis, such as how much more money would generators cost?—and different things like that.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you. Anyone else want to contribute to this? Yes, Ms. Carbone.

Ms. CARBONE. Mr. Chairman, the American Red Cross is working very diligently with our community partners to do everything we can. What I would really like to say about this is that all of our partners need to come to the table and that includes the private sector, because they can help us meet these needs. You cannot do it at every single shelter every single time, especially when you are talking about hurricane shelters. What you need to do is you need to know how to get that resource to that shelter in a certain amount of time. So we are committed to working with our community partners. I think there is a lot of attention and a lot of good work being done on this around the State of Florida to really try our hardest frankly to make sure that we can serve every citizen in the State of Florida as best we can to meet those needs.

Mr. SMITH. I am sorry, I need to re-address something. One of the things that is in my testimony is an article by Ms. Lynn Ross from out in Washington State and one of the things that is important to note in that is that she pointed out to me in our discussion, earthquakes. I do not deal with those, but she pointed out to me that she can identify all the buildings in the world that she wants to meet ADA, but that may be the buildings that are inhabitable after an earthquake. So the time period to be able to provide that is extremely important.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. We have got to resolve this, most definitely.

Mr. Russell.

Mr. RUSSELL. I had the opportunity to serve on the Comprehensive Planning Guide Development Group with FEMA and one of the CPGs they are coming out with has to do with functional needs and it is a hairy subject, but the key is at the planning stage to get everybody to the table. That is at the community level.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you. Anyone else on this side?

[No response.]

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Okay. I am going to recognize Congressman—Ranking Member Clarke for any further questions. I know he has got to get to the airport, probably has to leave in a few minutes. Would you like to add a couple of things?

Mr. CLARKE of Michigan. This has been a great session. I do not have any further questions but I really appreciate your input, especially on the EMPG and also the Federal procurement process and contracting. Chairman, thank you for raising these issues. I know that you plan on having a subsequent hearing with Administrator Fugate and actually convey to him what this panel's insight is all about. Hopefully I can work with you on getting our message out.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you very much.

Mr. CLARKE of Michigan. I appreciate it.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. If you will bear with me, I do have a few more questions. We can go over 12:00. I do not know if anyone has to catch any flights. Are we okay? Very good.

As part of FEMA's integrated public alert and warning system—and I know you all brought this up—all cell phones must be capable of receiving emergency alerts through the Personal Localized Alert Network, known as PLAN, by April 2012; New York and Washington, DC, as early as the end of this year. That is what I am told.

Have you been able to provide input to FEMA or the FCC on the type of system that will best meet your needs? What guidance, if any, have you received from FEMA and the FCC on PLAN and the best way to use it to warn citizens of a hazard in your area? I know Pasco County is working on this issue as well.

Who would like to begin on this one?

Mr. KOON. Congressman, I have actually had conversations with Pasco County's emergency management about this system as well. We are very excited about the possibility of it. As I mentioned before, the State does have—many counties, many municipalities, schools, hospitals, et cetera, have emergency notification systems, but none of them are going to be able to reach those citizens who are visiting the State, you know the million-plus tourists who could be around, they are not going to be in that system. It will also not localize it. It is going to be based on—a fixed system will be based on their home address and so will not help them if they are on the interstate, for example.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Right.

Mr. KOON. So we are very excited about this system as part of the overall notification system within the State, to be able to alert citizens to an emergent issue, tornado warning, flash flood warning, et cetera. Thus far, we have not had significant conversations with FEMA about this system, but we are pressing so that we can implement as quickly as possible following the April 2012 implementation date.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Anyone else? Yes, Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Chairman, we completely agree this needs to occur. In Florida, we have 103 percent saturation rate of cell phones, I carry three of them myself.

[Laughter.]

Mr. SMITH. I will tell you this needs to be in partnership with the NOAA weather radio system, because I will tell you on Groundhog Day, the people that died, the reason they died—we lost 21 people in my county. The reason they died is what woke them up was their mobile phone or the home that they were in being de-

stroyed by the tornado. So they did not have NOAA weather radios and we push them significantly.

But there are issues like in some parts of our State where the NOAA weather radio coverage is not as good as cell phone coverage. So we know that if they are getting that cell phone, people are going to pay more attention to their cell phone, we believe. Because the NOAA weather radio is one of those things that if it keeps going off a couple of times, they are going to turn it off so they can get some sleep. But they will not turn off their cell phone. So that is why we are very excited about this process.

I will tell you that any county in the State of Florida is willing to be a test bed to be able to utilize that system.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Very good. Right now if you have the land-based, you have the reverse 9–1–1.

Mr. SMITH. Yes.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. This would not work for visitors and those that do not have land lines.

Mr. SMITH. In Lake County, it does not work for those that do not have—that are visitors.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. How would it work with a cell phone, would it be a text message?

Mr. SMITH. That is my understanding; yes, sir. We are looking for the—most of the information I have is from the press release that they had and in discussions with our State representative and the gentlemen in Pasco County, is that it would be a text message and it would be a different type of tone. However, it is not all that exciting just yet because there has to be an enabled phone. So we will have to go through a generation or two of cell phones for everybody to be able to get that. But, you know, at my house, I am getting one every 2 years because my kid wants something newer. So I think we are going to be able to get there rather quickly because of the way the plans are and different things like that. So this really is the way to work, to be able to do this. I think because of the way our society is, and there may be a way that we push out the information and be able to go back to what you were asking about, about getting our citizens more engaged. If they know they are going to be able to get that—you know, we do have to be careful of the big brother philosophy that he can reach out and touch me. But having that issue or that knowledge is tremendous.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. We must take our hearing impaired and our visually impaired folks into consideration as well.

Ms. Willis.

Ms. WILLIS. Yes, sir. One of the issues that we are facing in Tampa is we have a system called Work Tampa. We have moved away from one that was actually upgraded to having a notification that provides text messages, that will call their home phone system and that will provide e-mail. We recognize that people are carrying smartphones, the majority of people in the United States certainly in highly populated areas are not registering for land-line service.

One thing that I find exciting about the Federal level pushing this notification process and system out is that it is somewhat taking the onus off of the citizens. We are having a major issue with getting residents to actually register for the system, getting subscribers. We have had the system in place for about a year now,

we have a population of over 300,000 people, we have 5,000 people registered for the system. So it is on us to actually promote the system, tell them why they should use it. You know, here in Florida, we have something called hurricane fatigue, people get a little bit tired.

On top of all of this, we have a lot of visitors that come to our area. We would like them to receive alert texts, alert messages. So if the Federal Government is pushing out this program, it's so beneficial because no matter where they are, they can receive an alert text or an alert message. They do not have to go into Tampa to register for the system. But chances are, they will not even know about it unless we are promoting it so effectively in the towns and everywhere else, that they actually can use the system.

So, you know, from my point of view as an emergency manager in Tampa, having the Federal Government push out a notification system is absolutely awesome.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Very good. Can someone maybe elaborate on what is in place for the hearing impaired or visually impaired as far as a warning is concerned? Could someone address that?

Mr. SMITH. I can tell you with the NOAA weather radios, there is a device that they can get where there is a flashing light and then to wake people up at night, there is a bed shaker. It is a device that they can attach to their bed.

The use for the sight—if it is a text, I believe that they have phones that are capable of being able to convert that text. Like my new Bluetooth converts my texts to audio so that I am getting email, so I am not texting and driving—because that is illegal—or not yet, but it should be.

So there are—as was mentioned, getting the private sector involved, this is an innovative way to get them involved with the service that is going to need to be provided. Because if it is a text, we are still going to want the people that are driving to get it and we do not want them to wreck while they are trying to read the text about the wreck that is up ahead of them. So there are a lot of things that we are going to have to deal with, to include all the different specific populations.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you.

My next question is for Mr. Smith, Mr. Russell, and Ms. Willis. The International Association of Emergency Managers has supported a number of initiatives to strengthen FEMA's disaster response capabilities, including ensuring that local emergency managers have meaningful participation in FEMA's policymaking process. Do you believe FEMA has fostered a culture of cooperation with local emergency managers with respect to policy development? As a follow-on, as I am sure you are aware, the Gulf Coast of Florida was significantly impacted by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill last year. During the response, local officials in this area were frustrated by the unified command's communication efforts. I heard it everywhere. That is, they were concerned that while the unified command was proficient in providing information, problems arose when local officials attempted to pass information on needs or conditions on the ground back up the chain.

In your experience in working with FEMA in response to disasters, does the information chain sufficiently work in both direc-

tions? Because it must. Are your concerns heard and considered promptly and effectively? If they are not, I need to know about it. I would imagine the FEMA liaison position discussed by Mr. Russell will go a long way in helping to correct these issues. Are liaisons in place throughout the different States? I know that is a lot, but if you can—maybe all of you want to comment on that.

We will go with Mr. Smith, Mr. Russell, Ms. Willis, and anybody else who wants to comment.

Mr. SMITH. The answer in general to the question is yes. One exception that I did bring up earlier is the FNSS document. I am not sure—that is one of the biggest concerns we have at the local level, is why did that not go through the normal vetting process, why were we not consulted? All of a sudden, here is this document. That is what caused that frustration is because they had gotten so good at asking us our opinion. However, do we provide—you know, their challenge is do we provide it as much as we should? I would hazard to say no, we do not, because we are dealing with other things, and then we complain about it, "Hey, how did this get through?" So in their defense, you know, there are some things that the locals need to do better on providing that feedback.

But the answer in general to your question is yes, I do believe that. Their e-mail has been very good, about being able to provide that, they are real good about being able to accept it electronically and put things on their FTP site and there are different committees that they are looking at for locals to be engaged with.

On the Deepwater Horizon issue, you know, that was not FEMA.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. No, I realize that.

Mr. SMITH. That was DHS.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Yes.

Mr. SMITH. That was in all issues because of OPA 90, because of the fact that OPA 90 was designed really and truly from the Exxon Valdez and from the incident that occurred here in Tampa Bay where the tanker hit the skyline bridge. So that is what OPA 90 was designed for. It was not designed for a volcano of oil spewing from the bottom of the ocean. So really and truly systems were overwhelmed. The way the Coast Guard is designed, Florida is split up into two different Coast Guard commands, so there are challenges with that and that goes back to the point about the sovereignty of local and State government.

There was not an ability for the locals to be able to control the assets. Eventually we got that, we were able to get that, but it took some time and that was a huge frustration, not being able to do that. So I believe that DHS has heard us on that, I believe the Coast Guard has heard us on that. Definitely, you know, I spent a week-and-a-half in Tallahassee working with the DEM staff, all the DEP staff or Department of Environmental Protection, that were involved with that. They are working to try to work that with our Federal partners to be able to get that better. I know that the Coast Guard has reached out to us at the local level better. We have established that relationship a little bit better.

You know, one of the challenges is not so much for like this area here in the Tampa Bay area, because as Ms. Willis pointed out in her testimony, they are used to dealing with a lot of this stuff. They are used to an active port. But when you have our smaller

counties, particularly up in the panhandle, and that is what was impacted, was our smaller counties, they do not have active ports, they were not having that relationship with the Coast Guard. I do believe the Coast Guard has heard that, they are engaging with the smaller communities that have just a little bay that people will come in and out of, that does not have the actual commerce. So there is improvement on the horizon for that—not to make a pun. But there are ways that we can do that and I believe we are engaging.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you very much.

Mr. Russell.

Mr. RUSSELL. Yes, sir. As to FEMA involving the local emergency managers, as I said before, I do have the opportunity of serving on the Comprehensive Preparedness Guide Development Team. That is probably 50 percent local. We have a few State representatives and the rest are FEMA and the contractor group. But we put together some new documents, working together, and they are actively putting the concerns that we have into these documents. So I am satisfied that is happening.

I am disappointed that the peer review program for vetting of the Homeland Security Grants, including EMPG, has disappeared I believe within the last couple of years, and that is something I think really benefitted the country, because there was a peer review process. I think if we had more peer review-type processes in the way policies are made, I think we will have a better partnership all along.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Makes sense to me. I know you agree with that, Ms. Willis.

Ms. WILLIS. Yeah, I do agree. One area where I would like to see more interaction—let me give you the overview of how it works in Florida and for every State, and this is something that you probably have heard time and time again. It is FEMA to the State to the county to the city. So I work with the City of Tampa and as a result, I have very little interaction with FEMA. Now we have over 400,000 people in our population that we deliver—over 300,000 people, but the point of the matter is that I have very little interaction with FEMA. So whatever we are doing, you know, they may or may not be aware of it.

Our interaction is just that they are telling us, setting guidance and telling us what we need to do. So as far as pulling up a chair to the table and having everyone involved in the policymaking and discussions, that has not happened.

Now on the flip side, with the Deepwater Horizon, I did appreciate them reaching out to our Mayor and our inter-governmental affairs and getting us on the conference call and allowing us to participate and have some local input into what was going on in the State of Florida specifically, since we are dealing with Tampa Bay and the Gulf area.

So, you know, in summary, we need more interaction with FEMA at the local level, because if something happens in Tampa with the port, with the Republican National Convention, with the Super Bowl, it would be good to have a liaison that I actually am familiar with and I actually know their name.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. There is not a liaison in this area that we know of?

Ms. WILLIS. There may be, I do not know that.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Okay, very good. Yes, Mr. Russell.

Mr. RUSSELL. It was the National Advisory Council that was comprised of private sector, local, State, and other groups to help with the policymaking in the past. I think that has kind of faded away. We do have a regional DAC in place, but it has pretty much become inactive. Maybe more emphasis on reviving, you know, the advisory councils in all the regions and then a National council, may be a step towards achieving that partnership.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Very good, thank you.

Ms. Carbone, did you want to add something?

Ms. CARBONE. No.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Okay. Anyone over here?

Mr. Koon, what went wrong with the response plan as far as the Deepwater spill?

Mr. KOON. Congressman, I was not with DEM at the time, but I do believe there were some issues in the beginning in simply understanding who was in charge of the situation. It took several weeks for that to rectify itself. Luckily, it was a slow-moving event so they had a little bit of opportunity in the State of Florida to get that in place before the oil hit the beach.

One of the things we are concerned about is the Cuba offshore oil drilling. We are potentially within 90 days now of them actually beginning to drill. My latest estimation was that they are about 30 days away from moving the rig from Singapore and then about 60 days once it is in place—or 60 days to move it in place off Cuba. Its position in the Gulf stream should a similar incident occur there could put that on Florida beaches within 1 to 3 days. So we would not have the same luxury of time that we had with the Deepwater Horizon spill. We are working very closely with the Coast Guard to ensure that we do have a better game plan going forward, but the concern is that we may not be there in time for this rig to be in place. So we are working very closely, again, with the Coast Guard at the State to ensure that the same situation does not repeat itself.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you. Anyone else who would like to comment? Please, Ms. Dragani.

Ms. DRAGANI. I will comment on the liaison, positioning of the liaison. The thing when Mr. Russell was talking about having a liaison on the ground, it was in a response capacity. We do not typically have FEMA liaisons in the State on a day-to-day basis.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. But they are designated.

Ms. DRAGANI. They are available through those regional FEMA offices. So just a clarification.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Anyone else? Yes.

Mr. SMITH. The Florida liaison is based out of the Thomasville, Georgia office of FEMA.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thomasville office.

Mr. SMITH. I have got him in my Blackberry, so it is not an issue with us. But Ms. Willis, I agree with what she said as a municipality, I just happened to meet him when I went up to Tallahassee for a meeting. But that does exist for us to be able to do that.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Very good. Thank you.

Are there any further concerns that you would like to address? Because I do not have any more questions and we still have a few minutes. Mr. Koon, you are recognized.

Mr. KOON. Congressman, I will be brief. It follows on with the Red Cross' Ready Rating Program. One of the programs that I have concern about of FEMA's is the Private Sector Preparedness Program, the PS Prep Program for short. Although I have not paid close attention to it in the last couple of months since I joined the State, I feel that that program is somewhat languishing. That is the program that would certify businesses as being prepared for emergencies, for disasters. I feel that they have got a structure in place but they have yet to create the incentive for a business to take part in that program. There are really two reasons that a business would participate in it. One is that it was regulatory or required by law. The other is that it provided some return on investment. At this point, it is a voluntary program, but it does not provide any return on investment.

The return on investment could come in one of two ways. It could either be a financial return on investment in that you increased your sales or you reduced your costs because you had the certification. No such provision is in place for that at the moment. The other reason that a business would participate in this program is because it generated some kind of goodwill, either the goodwill of their employees, the goodwill of their customers, the goodwill of the community as a whole through increased media exposure, et cetera.

But right now, the program has no such way in which to generate that goodwill. As a result, there is no real incentive for a business to participate in the PS Prep Program. Unless FEMA comes up with a way to generate such goodwill or comes up with a way to help generate such financial incentives, I believe that program will continue to languish and nothing will come of it.

Alternatively though, the Ready Rating Program I think is a good alternative. It is easy to use and it is associated with the American Red Cross, so by participating in that program, there is a goodwill associated and so businesses are more likely to participate in the program. It is easy to use and it comes with American Red Cross' stamp of approval.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you. Anyone else? Anything further? Yes, sir.

Mr. SMITH. One thing that we are going to need more details on is the changes of frequencies and narrow banding by the Federal Communications Commission, the inter-operability. Here in Florida, we have our smaller counties, our constrained counties, are on a VHS system and have had to go to the narrow banding and they are losing their footprint. There are some challenges with that. So that is something that I would encourage you to review and look at and see what other types of things are out there, because as we see the Federal budget constricting, working on the ability to provide for those areas that are not able to really—their budgets are constricting also and communications equipment is not something that is easily bought, very expensive.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. I agree. That should be a priority. Good point. Yes, sir.

Mr. RUSSELL. Homeland Security has a consortium of training centers and EMI is not funded anywhere the level of those training centers. Those training centers are able to take their resident courses and put them on the road. EMI cannot do that, they are under-funded. I think that would go a long ways toward preparedness in the local communities if we could deliver those resident courses out in the field, like the Homeland Security courses are offered. So it is not just a matter of funding, it is a matter of supporting that program.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Very good. Ms. Willis.

Ms. WILLIS. I just would like to say it would beneficial to get FEMA to tell us what is going right across the country, at the National level, so that we are not operating blindly.

The other thing is I want to applaud FEMA for initiating the private sector partnership. I think that is one area where there has been a big gap and I think that we will be able to fill it with some more private sector partnerships. I am looking forward to that. I would like to see how FEMA puts boots on the ground, how FEMA is going to make sure that program is fully put into process.

That is just what I would say, more public-private partnerships.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you. Ms. Carbone.

Ms. CARBONE. Well, I think we have all talked about the important work of all of our agencies and what we are doing here. If I could just personally thank you for bringing this to everyone's attention, because in the State of Florida, each citizen needs to bear personal responsibility for being prepared. That is the message we are trying to give in our communities. We give it as often as we can and as loud or soft as we can, depending on the circumstances, depending on our audience. But really to take that message to our communities and to partner together and say we are all working together the best that we can, but you still bear responsibility for yourself, for your family, and your community. When you make a difference and you do that, then that is going to mean a big difference for our community coming back together.

So, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for bringing this really important message to us.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you very much. I like Mr. Russell's suggestion. It starts in our schools and with our children. We have to create this culture of preparedness.

Thank you very much and I appreciate the audience being here, the constituents, but also representatives of local agencies as well.

I thank the witnesses for their valuable testimony and, of course, Congressman Clarke, for his questions. The Members of the subcommittee may have some additional questions and I am sure there are Members that could not attend today that will have questions for the witnesses and we will ask the witnesses to respond in writing.

The hearing record will be open for 10 days. The subcommittee stands adjourned. Thanks so much.

[Whereupon, at 12:25 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

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