



**One Hundred Eleventh Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515**

September 17, 2009

The Honorable W. Craig Fugate
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Administrator Fugate:

As Ranking Members of the Subcommittees on Management, Investigations, and Oversight and Emergency Communications, Preparedness, and Response of the Committee on Homeland Security, we write to express our strong opposition to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) September 4, 2009 decision to award a nearly \$1 million Fire Prevention and Safety grant to the ACORN Institute of New Orleans, Louisiana. This organization has engaged in questionable, and in some cases unlawful behavior, and should not receive Federal funds.

According to the grant guidance for the Fiscal Year 2008 Fire Prevention and Safety Grant Program issued in February 2009, "[e]ligible applicants for [Fire Prevention and Safety grants] include fire departments and national, regional, state, local, or community organizations that are *recognized for their experience and expertise in fire prevention and safety programs and activities.*" (emphasis added) While the ACORN Institute is a national organization, we are unaware of their "recognized...experience and expertise in fire prevention and safety programs and activities."

However, even if the ACORN Institute has the relevant experience and expertise, it should still not receive Federal funding of this sort because it is not worthy of the public trust. ACORN employees have been charged with voter fraud in multiple states. In addition, ACORN employees were recently caught on tape encouraging prostitution, tax fraud, and human trafficking. This is not the type of organization to which scarce homeland security resources should be provided.

We are not alone in our distrust of ACORN and belief that the organization should not receive Federal funds. Earlier this week the United States Senate voted overwhelmingly to bar funding under the Fiscal Year 2010 Departments of Transportation, Treasury, and Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Act from being provided to ACORN. Majority Leader Steny Hoyer indicated that the House of Representatives may also take action related to Federal funding for ACORN. In addition, the United States Census Bureau terminated its affiliation with

ACORN for the 2010 census citing public concern and the potential for a negative impact on the census.

We urge FEMA to rescind ACORN's Fire Prevention and Safety grant and give it to another reputable organization in the New Orleans area. We look forward to your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



GUS M. BILIRAKIS
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Management,
Investigations, and Oversight



MIKE ROGERS
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Emergency
Communications, Preparedness, and
Response