

## **Statement of Ranking Member Laura Richardson (D-CA)**

### **“ENSURING THE TRANSPARENCY, EFFECTIVENESS, AND EFFICIENCY OF HOMELAND SECURITY GRANTS”**

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE, AND COMMUNICATIONS

Tuesday, March 20, 2012

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Mr. Chairman, before I move forward with my opening statement, in addition to the letter we received from 12 vital stakeholders, I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to submit 2 additional letters for record from critical stakeholders - the American Association of Port Authorities and the American Public Transportation Association.

Today we will discuss FEMA's FY 2012 preparedness grant allocations and FY 2013 grant consolidation proposal.

For more than a decade, since the 9/11 attacks, the Department has provided State and local governments with homeland security preparedness grants to invest in capabilities to strengthen our Nation.

Administrator Fugate has referenced on several occasions that first responders' ability to successfully respond to recent disasters on the local level is based primarily on the investments made by FEMA's preparedness grant programs.

We should reaffirm our support for first responders on the local level due to the changing complexities of the terrorism threat and increased intensity of natural disasters.

Unfortunately, over the last two years, my Republican colleagues have chosen to cut vital homeland security grant programs.

We can all agree that efforts to promote efficiency should be sought, but we can also agree that the American people deserve the best-prepared, equipped and trained first responders.

I appreciate the Administration's attempt to balance its commitment to fiscal responsibility with the need to strengthen the security of our Nation in the FY 2013 budget.

However, this new grant approach falls short due to the lack of details, absence of broad stakeholder outreach, and governance structure, which will erode the good work performed over the last 10 years.

Grant cuts and unnecessary programmatic changes affect our Nation's first responders' ability to preserve necessary capabilities to prevent, protect, mitigate, respond to and recover from man-made and natural disasters.

The FY 2013 grants consolidation proposal gives States full discretion to administer grants based on a competitive and individual project based approach.

I am concerned that these drastic changes will negatively impact the preparedness capabilities of our State, territory, tribal and local partners.

Although I am satisfied with FEMA's decision to keep the Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPG) and Assistance to Fire Grants (AFG) as independent programs, and provide adequate funding given our economic climate.

I am extremely concerned about the impractical approach to consolidate 16 separate, fully functioning, vital grant programs under the National Preparedness Grant Program (NPGP).

A better approach would have been to conduct an assessment to see which of these programs could serve as best practices or models.

For instance, the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) grant program brings together all of the various first responder disciplines in order to direct funding to close regional preparedness gaps, sustain capabilities, and reduce risk in high threat, high density urban areas, such as Los Angeles.

Congress created discrete grant programs to direct grant investments to address specific gaps in national and local preparedness capabilities.

This is why it is absolutely unclear to me how FEMA determined to consolidate independently purposed programs, such as the UASI, the State Homeland Security Program (SHSP), Port Security Grant Program (PSGP) and Transit Security Grant Program (TSGP).

In my district in California, the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles are two of the busiest seaports in the United States, therefore requiring adequate security to support the Nation's economy is essential.

This is why I am quite perplexed by FEMA's decision to reduce port security funding by 59% in FY 2012 and place it in a competitive grant process in FY 2013.

The consolidation and reductions to our Nation's port security and transit security grants are unacceptable, and threaten to undercut our ability to ensure that our seaports and critical infrastructure are adequately protected.

I look forward to hearing FEMA's response to these concerns; and efforts to implement performance measures.

I know that Mayor Nutter's testimony will help illuminate the important role of the preparedness grant programs and the success of local homeland security initiatives.