

**Opening Statement of Chairman Joseph Lieberman
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Hearing
Nomination Hearing for Harvey E. Johnson and Jeffrey William Runge
Dec. 12, 2007**

Good morning. This hearing will come to order. Today this Committee will consider the nominations of Admiral Harvey E. Johnson Jr. to be Deputy Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and Dr. Jeffrey William Runge to be Assistant Secretary for Health Affairs and Chief Medical Officer, U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Both have been serving at DHS for some time now, and we thank them for their service thus far. Welcome gentlemen.

I also want to welcome my friend and colleague, Sen. Richard Burr of North Carolina, who will introduce Dr. Runge. These key leadership positions the nominees are being considered for today were created as part of the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act, authored by Sen. Collins and me.

That Act was the result of this Committee's eight-month investigation into why the response to Hurricane Katrina was so poorly executed at almost all levels of government and what must be done to ensure that sad spectacle is never repeated.

The Post-Katrina Reform Act was designed to ensure that FEMA becomes the hub of the federal government's efforts to prepare for and respond to disasters of all kinds – whether natural catastrophe, devastating accident or terrorist attack – and that DHS has all the tools it needs to protect the homeland and respond to a disaster when it occurs.

The FEMA Deputy Administrator will have broad responsibility for implementing the Post-Katrina Act and building a new, stronger FEMA. As such, I have very high expectations for the nominee to this most important position, which must be capable of assisting Chief Paulison in setting a new direction for FEMA – to be far more forward leaning and to be prepared to respond to and recover from a catastrophe, among many other things.

The challenges that still face FEMA are many – and they include leading our nation's efforts to prepare for the next disaster by strengthening FEMA's regional offices, hiring more career senior executives to institutionalize change, and continuing to help citizens in New Orleans and across the Gulf Coast recover from Katrina and Rita. And FEMA must focus on these tasks even as it responds – effectively who are still struggling by all accounts – to current crises, like the recent wild fires which have displaced families in Southern California.

The other nomination we will consider today is also critically important to the security of our homeland. Under our Post-Katrina Reform Act, the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) at DHS is the principal adviser to the DHS Secretary on medical and public health issues.

Among the responsibilities of the CMO is coordinating the federal response to the threat of bioterrorism, ensuring coordination of all medical preparedness and response activities of the Department, and serving as the face of DHS for the state, local, and tribal public health communities.

These different elements are not traditionally within the confines of public health, but are essential to an effective medical response. As principal advisor to the Secretary for medical and public health, the Chief Medical Officer is tasked with ensuring the

nation can carry out the disaster medical response in all its elements. Dr. Runge brings strong qualifications to the CMO position.

Gentlemen, I thank you for offering yourselves for public service in these demanding jobs. Both of you face daunting challenges – but they must be met if we are to make our country safer. You will be on the front lines of trying to prepare for and respond to the next disaster – natural or terrorist – that we know is sure to come and for which we must be prepared.

Sen. Collins?