

United States Senate Budget Committee
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My name is Bruce Hoover and I am the Fargo Fire Chief. I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to participate today.

I am going to begin by stressing the importance of federal assistance in providing quality emergency services for the citizens of North Dakota. Additionally, I am confident that the most efficient means of providing federal assistance is to provide it directly to the local political subdivision and to the agencies directly responsible for provision of services to the citizens.

From the perspective of the Fargo Fire Department, I would prioritize federal assistance in the following order:

1. SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) Grants; this program provides funding directly to fire departments to increase staffing. From my perspective, this program has been severely under funded.
2. Assistance to Firefighter Grant Program; funding directly to fire departments for equipment purchases.
3. COPS Grants; funding was provided directly to the police department that was important in the interoperable communications system that is utilized by all area emergency responders.
4. Homeland Security Funds.

I am concerned with funding issues as we have additional needs. These needs are well beyond what we can fund through our budget.

- Communities throughout the state of North Dakota have the expectation that emergency services in larger cities will be available to respond to emergencies in small communities. Although we wish to be good neighbors, we do not have the resources to provide all of the services we need within our own jurisdiction, much less for others. The current method of distributing Homeland security funds to the state, and the state distributing them to local jurisdictions has intensified this problem as those communities that have made a commitment to public safety are not recognized and many of the funds have been distributed to communities with no capability to respond to emergencies. A method of allocation that provides funds to population centers would be helpful.
- The cost of specialized equipment is very high and places an unreasonable burden on the citizens of an individual city when there is the expectation that it will be available to multiple jurisdictions.
- The expectation that larger communities will provide emergency services to smaller communities will require that funds be allocated to begin provision of

those services, and that a base level of funding continue to cover the expense of maintaining and replacing response resources. Personal protective equipment and monitoring equipment have a life expectancy of five years or less. Locally we have equipment that has reached the end of its life expectancy and we cannot afford to replace it.

- We want to be good neighbors and assist other political subdivisions in North Dakota. However, the current distribution method of Homeland Security Funds has not been effective in dealing with these concerns, or in enhancing the level of emergency service to the citizens. It would be beneficial to fund directly those political subdivisions that are in a position to assist others.

North Dakota emergency responders are acutely aware that no political subdivision within the state has the resources to successfully mitigate large emergencies without assistance from other agencies and jurisdictions. This is why Fargo Fire has mutual aid agreements with cities like Bismarck, North Dakota and Sioux Falls, South Dakota. The reality is that when there is a major incident the cities that are called on to assist are cities like Fargo, Bismarck, and Sioux Falls. This concept is not recognized when Homeland Security Funds all flow through the state, for example, under the states current funding strategy, the Fargo Fire Department has not received Homeland Security Funds since FY2005.

If you have any questions I will be happy respond to them.

Thank you again for the assistance our department has received, and thank you for the opportunity to comment today.