

Rep. Dave Loebsack's Testimony before the House Committee on the Budget

Wednesday, March 18, 2009

3:30pm - 210 Cannon House Office Building

I want to thank the Chairman and Ranking Member for the opportunity to testify before the Committee on the Fiscal Year 2010 Budget proposal.

As I consider my priorities for the FY10 Budget, I believe it is necessary to focus on the effects of the current economic crisis on our States. States across this country are facing severe budget cuts. To make matters worse, Iowa, and many other states, are dealing with this situation in the wake of severe natural disasters.

During the summer of 2008, the State of Iowa experienced the worst natural disaster in our history. In Iowa, 85 of 99 total counties were declared disaster areas by President Bush. We were not alone; the floods of 2008 affected many in the Midwest.

I want to thank my colleagues for their support last Congress. The Supplemental funding appropriated by Congress helped begin our recovery process but still Iowa continues to struggle to recover and rebuild.

President Obama has submitted a budget blueprint for Fiscal Year 2010 that is thoughtful and balances the need for investment with the need for fiscal restraint. For States like Iowa, perhaps one of the most significant differences between this budget and those of the past is that it takes into account the cost of major disasters and the cost of disaster recovery.

Iowa alone has billions of dollars in damage statewide. There are thousands of families with damaged homes in sub-zero temperatures, businesses rapidly closing their doors, and an increasing amount of unemployed individuals. While we have made great strides through hard-work and the realization that disaster recovery is a long-term commitment, I strongly urge the Committee to recognize the need in the Fiscal Year 2010 budget for continued and additional assistance to those states which had severe natural disasters in 2008 and are still struggling in 2009.

I represent the 2nd District of Iowa with arguably the most significant amount of damage from the flooding. This District includes Iowa's second largest city, Cedar Rapids, which sustained some of the most significant damage although numerous other towns in my District such as Palo and Oakville suffered devastating damage as well. The State continues to have unmet needs ranging from assistance for housing, business, public services, social services, and future disaster mitigation.

To highlight Iowa's continuing struggles I would like to submit for the record letters from all over my district, from both city and county officials of Cedar Rapids, Coralville, Columbus Junction, Fort Madison, Iowa City, Keokuk, Keosauqua, Muscatine, Oakville, and Palo in addition to letters from Davis County, the Des Moines County and Linn County Boards of Supervisors, and the State Legislature's Rebuild Iowa Committee Chairman which further demonstrate the broad range of needs in the state and the damage in each of these areas. I am also submitting a letter from the Economic Planning & Redevelopment Corp., a group that was formed post-disaster to aid economic redevelopment efforts in the City of Cedar Rapids. All of their combined hard work has helped immensely with the rebuilding effort.

As the nation experiences one of its most severe economic downturns, it is exceedingly important to address the needs of states recovering from severe disasters. Thank you again for this opportunity and I will be happy to answer any questions on the status of Iowa in the wake of the 2008 disasters or other concerns you may have.