

# **STATEMENT OF CHAIRWOMAN LAURA RICHARDSON (D-CA)**

## **Subcommittee on Emergency Communications, Preparedness, and Response Committee on Homeland Security**

### **Hearing: “Ensuring Strong FEMA Regional Offices: An Examination of Resources and Responsibilities”**

**March 16, 2010 at 10:00 AM  
311 Cannon House Office Building**

---

All of us who serve on this panel want FEMA to be successful.

The Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (Post-Katrina) included many reforms intended to give FEMA the tools necessary to best support our citizens and first responders when disaster strikes.

Few reforms were as important as the ones designed to reinvigorate FEMA's ten regional offices.

For FEMA to be truly effective, it must develop strong relationships with its state, local and tribal partners. These relationships are best built and nurtured at the Regional level.

Headquarters should largely develop the agency's policies, and the Regions should lead the implementation of those policies.

Of course that is easier said than done. But I am very encouraged that Administrator Fugate has taken some key first steps toward empowering the regions.

Shortly after being confirmed, he delegated 10 authorities to the regional offices.

We want to use today's hearing to get an understanding from FEMA on how the Regions have implemented those 10 authorities and—more broadly—FEMA's future plans for further enhancing the Regions.

The Subcommittee wants to ensure that as more responsibilities are delegated down, the Regions have both the staffing and the expertise necessary to fulfill their new duties.

This is particularly true for the homeland security grant and preparedness programs. It is unclear to the Subcommittee whether the Regions currently have the capacity to manage the Homeland Security Grant Program.

For example, this fall FEMA announced that the majority of homeland security grant projects would have to undergo an environmental review process.

Putting aside the administrative burden this requirement places on grantees, our understanding is that there is just one person in each Region who will be responsible for reviewing hundreds of environmental reviews. This is a bottleneck waiting to happen.

It is also unclear to this Committee how the Region's preparedness and grant officers work together to ensure that federal resources are building State and local preparedness capabilities.

FEMA's leadership recognized that grants and preparedness efforts were largely siloed at headquarters and announced a reorganization in December intended to better integrate these efforts. We would like to hear if the Regions are considering a similar reorganization.

I understand that the hubs and spokes relationship is complex for any organization, and that certainly holds true for FEMA and its 10 Regions.

The National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) explored the FEMA headquarters-region complexity in its report, "FEMA's Integration of Preparedness and Development of Robust Regional Offices."

NAPA concluded that FEMA is making progress toward building more robust regional offices but that challenges still remain.

I would like to explore the recommendations NAPA makes for addressing these challenges, and ask Mr. Garratt and Mr. Russell whether they concur with NAPA's findings.

As I said earlier, the FEMA Regions should have meaningful relationships with state and local emergency managers.

I would like to hear from Mr. Long, Alabama's Director of Emergency Management, on what functions and services he believes the Regions should be providing to its state and local partners.