



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson

“The FY 2010 Budget for the Federal Emergency Management Agency”

June 9, 2009 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Emergency Communication, Preparedness, and Response Subcommittee hearing entitled “The FY 2010 Budget for the Federal Emergency Management Agency”:

“FEMA unfortunately has been pretty busy since the 2008 hurricane season given hurricanes Gustav and Ike, the Midwest floods, ice storms, wildfires, and dozens of other catastrophic incidents.

In the midst of all of these incidents FEMA still managed to develop and submit a comprehensive budget request.

As I said when the Secretary was here last month, I am committed to working to help secure a budget for the Department—including FEMA—that keeps on our commitment to fiscal responsibility while strengthening the security of our Nation.

I am also committed to executing my legislative responsibilities and producing authorization legislation to give FEMA the resources and authorities it needs to execute its missions.

That is why I have stated, and will state again here today, that I along with Chairman Cuellar and other members of this Committee plan to introduce a FEMA Authorization bill this year.

I look forward to FEMA’s support.

While I am generally supportive of the President’s FY2010 budget request for FEMA, I do have some concerns that I hope we can discuss here today.

First, some critical programs are being reduced simply because they received funds through the Recovery Act. While some of these cuts are appropriately justified, I am concerned that others contradict the intent and purpose of the Recovery Act.

For example, the Recovery Act provided \$100 million dollars to the Emergency Food and Shelter program. This program helps families who are losing their homes by paying a month of utilities, a month or rent, or maybe even a deposit for a new place to live.

FEMA’s FY2010 budget request cut this fund by half—from \$200 million to \$100 million simply because the program received funds through the Recovery Act.

The President’s budget also proposed cutting Port Security grants by \$150 million from the FY2009 funding level. Just like the Emergency Food and Shelter program, the amount of the proposed cut is identical to the amount allocated through the Recovery Act.

Cutting these programs clearly contradicts the intent of the Recovery Act, which was signed into law to help people during these difficult financial times.

In addition, I am very concerned about the proposed 70% decrease planned for the FIRE Grant Program. As a volunteer firefighter, I know how much communities rely on this critical program.

We must do our part to provide our first responders—including firefighters—with the tools they need

to perform their day-to-day duties as well as respond to catastrophic incidents.

As I noted, I do have some concerns but overall I am supportive of the President's request.

I was very pleased to see an increase of \$60 million to the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program.

The Congressional Budget Office reported in 2007 that we save at least three dollars for every dollar we spend on mitigation. FEMA estimated it to be a 4 to 1 cost savings. Either way, this is a solid investment.

I was also pleased to see that the President has made funding for the Urban Area Security Initiative a priority.

This grant program focuses on one of the major recommendations of the 9/11 Commission and addresses the unique challenges that high-density urban areas face when planning, training, exercising, and responding to a catastrophic incident.

In closing, I'd like to say that I look forward to working with you to ensure that FEMA has the resources it needs to execute its missions—including your primary mission to reduce the loss of life and property and protect this Nation from all hazards."

#

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact Dena Graziano or Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
H2-176, Ford House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515
Phone: (202) 226-2616 | Fax: (202) 226-4499
<http://homeland.house.gov>