

Statement of Chairman Gus M. Bilirakis

Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications

“Ensuring Effective Preparedness and Response – An Assessment of the Fiscal Year 2012 Budget Request for the Federal Emergency Management Agency”

March 9, 2011

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The President’s Fiscal Year 2012 budget requests \$10 billion for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Of this amount, the budget includes \$815 million for Management and Administration; \$3.8 billion for State and Local Programs; and \$1.8 billion for the Disaster Relief Fund.

In this difficult budget climate, I am pleased to see that FEMA is taking steps to reduce its costs, without sacrificing operations. The request for Management and Administration is \$88 million less than the level in the Fiscal Year 2011 continuing resolution.

Much of this reduction is attributed to efficiencies and streamlined business processes. I hope to hear more from Administrator Fugate about these efficiencies and his timeline for the completion of program evaluations to identify any duplicative programs.

An issue that Administrator Fugate has been stressing is a “Whole of Community” approach to emergency management. This is an approach that local emergency managers and emergency response providers in my area of Florida and around the country have been following for years.

One way to accomplish this is to ensure that as policies are developed at the Federal level, officials at the state and local level and citizens are involved in the process. With this in mind, I must again raise an issue I raised with Administrator Fugate last month.

I have heard from emergency managers in my district and from around the country that they are concerned that the requirements of FEMA's Functional Needs Support Services guidance may impact their ability to open emergency shelters during a disaster. They have repeatedly sought clarification from FEMA and the Department of Justice on the application of this guidance, but have not received sufficient answers.

So, Administrator Fugate, I hope we can continue to discuss this issue and that you will work with me and my constituents to clarify these requirements so we can ensure that all citizens are accommodated during a disaster without impeding response capabilities.

Finally, I want to thank Administrator Fugate for hosting Members of this Subcommittee at FEMA last month. It was the beginning of a dialogue that I look forward to continuing this morning.