

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****The President's FY 2013 Budget Request for the Federal
Emergency Management Agency***

February 29, 2012 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled “The President's FY 2013 Budget Request for the Federal Emergency Management Agency”:

“In 2011, FEMA responded to 99 Major Disaster Declarations; 29 Emergency Declarations and 114 Fire Management Assistance Declarations. This nation has never experienced more man-made or natural tragedies that required Federal help than it did in 2011. Every corner of the nation was affected. Thousands of people suffered loss and displacement. Many of these disasters did not receive extensive media coverage.

None was on a large scale like Hurricane Katrina, but for the people who lived through them, they were catastrophic moments. And in those catastrophic moments, FEMA responded. Unfortunately, in 2011, FEMA had to contend with more than the record-breaking number of disasters.

Precisely at the moment when funding was most needed, and disaster assistance was critical, my friends on the other side of the aisle greeted this unprecedented number of disasters by cutting FEMA grant funding and attempting to require budgetary offsets for disaster relief.

This year, I hope that history does not repeat itself—either in the number of disasters or in FEMA grant funding reductions. This Congress must do its part to assure that in times of tragedy and crisis, FEMA is willing to respond and has adequate funding and staffing. But as we do our part, FEMA must also do its part.

I am encouraged that this agency is finally getting back on track. Many stakeholders have commented about the improvement in FEMA’s response—especially after the tornadoes in Joplin and Tuscaloosa. However, the nation needs to know that these stellar response efforts would not have been possible without the assistance of state and local first responders.

Those state and local first responders gained their training, expertise, and equipment through the use of Federal grant funding. Those grants were cut last year and will continue to be reduced this year.

FEMA's FY 2013 budget request includes a proposal to consolidate 16 individually-authorized preparedness grant programs into a single, insufficiently funded pool of money. Two weeks ago, Secretary Napolitano in testimony before this Committee pledged to include stakeholders in future discussions about grant reforms. I look forward to those discussions.”

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