

Statement of Ranking Member Donald M. Payne, Jr. (D-NJ)

The Future of FEMA: Stakeholder Recommendations for the Next Administrator

Emergency Preparedness, Response and Communications Subcommittee

Tuesday, February 14, 2017

I look forward to working with the Chairman to take the feedback we receive at today's hearing, as well as the follow-up hearing later this month, and use it to help FEMA better serve its State and local partners and disaster survivors. For the first time in eight years, FEMA is in transition and we are awaiting the nomination of a new administrator.

I have no doubt that FEMA is in capable hands with the Interim Administrator, but I am concerned that the Trump Administration has issued Executive Orders that affect the agency's activities before permanent leadership has been put in place.

For example, Executive Order 13768 on *Public Safety in the Interior of the United States*, directs DHS to make ineligible for FEMA grants "sanctuary jurisdictions," except for "law enforcement" purposes. The Executive Order was clearly drafted without the advice of anyone who would have to implement it.

Certainly, a permanent FEMA Administrator would have sought to clarify whether the President meant to block funding to jurisdictions in need of resources from the Emergency Management Performance Grant program, the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, the post-disaster Public Assistance Grant program, or the post-disaster Individual Assistance Grant program, among others.

In an era of evolving threats, increased weather events, and stretched budgets, we cannot send our State and local governments and first responder communities into a tailspin as they try to figure out whether or not the Federal government will continue to help them build and maintain preparedness capabilities.

I will be interested in understanding whether the Trump Administration conducted any outreach to the first responder community before or after issuing Executive Order 13768, and how the uncertainty caused by President Trump's Executive Order is affecting planning activities.

To keep America safe, prepared, and resilient, the emergency response community **must** have a voice in informing the Administration's policies and priorities. I urge the Trump Administration to be inclusive in this regard, and to continue Administrator Fugate's "whole community" emphasis on disaster preparedness.

I invited Save the Children to testify today because too often the special needs of children are overlooked in disaster planning activities. Administrator Fugate designated an individual at FEMA to be National Advisor on Children and Disasters to tackle that challenge, but that position has not been formally authorized. I am hopeful that the future FEMA Administrator will maintain that position.

This period of transition is an appropriate time to take inventory of the progress FEMA has made over the past eight years to become a more capable organization and to gather recommendations for the best path forward.