

**Member's Hearing Day  
Congressman Gene Green (TX – 29)  
House Committee on Appropriations – Subcommittee on Homeland Security  
April 26, 2018**

Thank you Chairman John Carter, Ranking Member Lucille Roybal-Allard, and members of this esteemed committee for providing this opportunity for all members to speak about priorities in the Department of Homeland Security, specifically concerning disaster relief in FEMA. The decisions made here after today will greatly impact the constituents of Texas's 29<sup>th</sup> Congressional District and the entire nation.

Last year, Houston and the Texas Gulf Coast endured one of the toughest years it's ever faced. Hurricane Harvey ravaged communities in my district in Houston and Harris County – work places, schools, homes, churches, and so much more. While we were nowhere prepared for the devastation we faced, Houston continues to prevail. Many people in Houston and all the Texas Gulf Coast have been saved by the help of FEMA's efforts. However, as natural disasters have continued to grow in the past few years and as the United States continues to grow economically, technologically, and demographically, it only stands to

reason that these disasters will only wreck more havoc and cost more money. We cannot wait until after a tragedy occurs to spend the money that will bring resources to destroyed communities. Additionally, we must ensure that this money is going to local governments who have a better understanding of how to best help after a disaster occurs.

After Hurricane Harvey, families throughout Houston and the entire Texas Gulf Coast were at a loss for how to get back to their daily lives, and when FEMA sent funds to the State of Texas it designated the Texas Land Commissioner to disburse those funds. I have endured, along with my constituents, Hurricane Ike and Allison, but it was not until Hurricane Harvey that the Land Commissioner became involved in recovery relief. We are now almost 9 months out from when Hurricane Harvey hit Houston, and according to federal agencies the Land Commissioner still does not have a plan that is best suited to help relieve the Houston and Harris County area. FEMA needs to not only have the resources to accurately map flood prone areas before a disaster hits but they must also provide the resources to local areas who can best assist those in a quickly and timely manner when disasters overcome our

communities. Directing FEMA to place Disaster Recovery Centers where community members can easily obtain the assistance and resources they need is paramount in relief situations. It does not make sense for people to travel miles, especially when roads are not easily accessible.

While each state has a different way of providing relief to their communities, it must be a priority for provided funding to go to the personnel that has the most experience in that area. In Texas, that is the local governments and our local flood control districts, not the state. Families cannot wait for our Land Commissioner to figure out a plan, when they are living without a home. When the next hurricane comes to Houston, we must ensure that the local Texas governments who better understands the issues and the area control the spending of relief money.

I want to thank the committee for the \$3 billion towards FEMA grant programs, including the \$262.6 million for flood mapping. This critical program will have lasting effects for years to come; however, when funding FEMA, we must ensure that FEMA uses this money wisely. Many constituents in my district live and work in high prone

flood zones and they cannot afford the high cost of insurance premiums. Thankfully we had many churches and nonprofits that came to help when those constituent's homes were destroyed. However, I urge you all to consider those who cannot afford insurance premiums when funding the National Flood Insurance Program. Seniors and those who are not wealthy need to be assisted with flood insurance that they can actually afford. If not, when the next flood occurs, they will again be left without the resources they desperately need to get their lives back in order.

Thank you again for the opportunity for me to bring these important issues to the Subcommittee's attention today.