

**Statement for the Record: Hearing Entitled “Oversight of the Federal Emergency
Management Agency”
Committee on Oversight & Accountability
Tuesday, November 19, 2:00 p.m.
2154 Rayburn**

Let me be clear—FEMA’s mission is to provide relief to all Americans, without regard to politics or partisanship. Recent reports that a FEMA employee instructed workers to skip homes displaying support for former President Trump are completely unacceptable. FEMA rightly fired the individual responsible. There is no place in FEMA for bias or misconduct that undermines its mission. We should ensure FEMA always operates in a non-partisan way, even under the most challenging circumstances. Perhaps my Republican colleagues should be reminded that there is no room for politicization of disaster relief—especially given their own history of obstructing FEMA’s efforts.

While unacceptable, this isolated incident pales in comparison to the broader Republican pattern of blocking FEMA’s ability to deliver aid to all Americans. Virginia was affected by Hurricane Helene. FEMA’s swift response—deploying disaster assistance teams, opening recovery centers, and approving critical funds—was essential to helping Virginia communities recover. But this success happened despite Republican obstruction. After Hurricane Michael, Republicans failed to replenish FEMA’s Disaster Relief Fund, forcing the agency to prioritize immediate needs over long-term recovery. This has real world consequences for Virginians, as well as others affected by Hurricanes Helene and Milton. To address this, Congress should work to pass an emergency funding bill if proposed by President Biden to address the urgent need for disaster relief following this brutal storm season.

Fewer resources to invest in long term projects make efficient responses to disasters more difficult; this reality is further exacerbated by an increasing number of extreme weather events each year in response to global climate change. After California’s deadliest wildfire in 2018, FEMA’s critical work was undercut by partisan delays and refusals to approve necessary aid. Trump has even been quoted questioning whether certain disaster victims were “his” people, further underscoring the troubling pattern of politicizing disaster relief.

It is particularly disheartening that political violence and disinformation have further hindered efforts of FEMA workers on the ground. Recently, FEMA workers faced harassment and armed confrontations while delivering aid. This violence undermines FEMA’s mission and highlights the threat posed to public servants who dedicate their lives to helping others as a result of Republicans’ politicization of this agency. FEMA workers are not the enemy—they are heroes. This intimidation has no place in the United States and I will continue to fight for the safety and dignity of every federal worker.

Hurricanes Milton and Helene serve as stark reminders of the growing intensity of natural disasters fueled by climate change. FEMA must remain above partisan politics if it is to meet the

**Statement for the Record: Hearing Entitled “Oversight of the Federal Emergency
Management Agency”**

Committee on Oversight & Accountability

Tuesday, November 19, 2:00 p.m.

2154 Rayburn

challenges posed by increasingly severe hurricanes, wildfires, and other crises. Climate change is indifferent to political boundaries, and FEMA’s work must reflect the same impartiality. If Republicans continue to politicize disaster response, underfund FEMA, or encourage division, it is the American people who will suffer the consequences.