

Testimony of David Gipson, Director

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Before the Energy Subcommittee of the U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee

State's Perspective on Energy Security Planning, Emergency Preparedness, and State Energy Programs

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Chairman Upton, Ranking Member Rush, and members of the Subcommittee, I am David Gipson, director of the Energy Resources Division of the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA), which serves as the State Energy Office. I also serve as co-chair of the Energy Security Committee of the National Association of State Energy Officials (NASEO). I am testifying today to give my perspective on energy security planning and emergency preparedness. I appreciate the Subcommittee's interest in this important issue, which has long been a focus of NASEO and the 56 state and territory energy offices.

First, it's important to note that Georgia's energy assurance planning activities leverage funds from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) State Energy Program (SEP). The funding helps ensure the local, state, and federal governments are coordinating planning and response efforts with the private sector, who owns the infrastructure. Energy assurance planning and response are interdependent functions that require government and the private sector to work together. This is accomplished through the formation of energy assurance plans as a part of the SEP, and performed through Emergency Support Function #12 – Energy (ESF-12). ESF-12 is part of a broader emergency operations plan that brings together many support functions to respond to emergencies. In Georgia, GEFA is the lead ESF-12 coordinator and utilizes SEP funding for both energy emergency planning and response. We take an all-hazards approach to planning, which means we prepare for energy emergencies affecting fuels and electricity. We leverage local, state, federal, and private-sector resources to make our state more resilient to energy disruptions that can ripple across the economy and threaten public safety.

To put the role of ESF-12 in context, I would like to describe our response to Hurricane Matthew in October 2016. In the eastern Caribbean, Matthew reached a Category 5 hurricane with winds of 160 miles per hour.

It made landfall in Haiti and eastern Cuba on October 4, 2016, as a Category 4. It continued through the Bahamas—weakening some—but it was still at a Category 3 when it set sights on the southeastern coast of the U.S. During this time, the ESF-12 team activated our energy assurance plan and prepared to lead ESF-12 in the State Operations Center (SOC), which is housed at the Georgia Emergency Management Agency. To prepare, we reached out to other state and private partners, such as the Georgia Public Service Commission, the Georgia Department of Agriculture, fuel suppliers, the Georgia Power Company, and our electric membership cooperatives and municipal power providers.

Once on-site at the SOC, we worked closely with the other ESFs to prepare for, monitor, and respond to the range of serious impacts caused by Hurricane Matthew. The storm caused more than 320,000 Georgians to lose power. We worked closely with the state's electric utilities around-the-clock to monitor power outages and to establish priority restoration for critical facilities, such as hospitals and nursing homes. During this storm, more than ever before, we felt the support of the U.S. DOE. I received a call from the Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability as the storm approached offering to send a regional energy assurance specialist to Georgia. A specialist was welcomed in Georgia and in other states in the region.

The value of the local, state, federal, and private-sector relationships in emergency events cannot be overstated. The federal presence made it easy to know the situation in surrounding states at all times. It allowed the federal energy assurance representatives to provide coordinated situational reports for all of the impacted states, containing similar information on impacts and restoration efforts. State resources during emergencies are busy clearing roadways, running contraflow operations on evacuation highways,

establishing shelters for evacuees, evacuating critical facilities like hospitals that are in harm's way, and ensuring critical facilities such as water treatment plants have back up power. The utility providers in Georgia have a strong track record with quick response times, and this storm was no different.

The ESF-12 functions simply cannot be done by any one entity alone. Local, state, federal, and private-sector resources are completely interdependent. This is especially true in a state like Georgia that imports all of its petroleum, natural gas, and coal from other states and countries.

Beyond hurricanes that threaten a direct hit to Georgia's coast, ESF-12 prepares for Gulf hurricanes that can linger in the state causing high winds and flooding, but more importantly, disrupt the pipelines that supply our fuel from the Gulf. We've seen multiple disruptions over the past nine years—from Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav, and Ike, along with disruptions like the recent pipeline explosion. Any time the flow of fuel is slowed to a city the size of Atlanta, it can be a major problem. In the case of the Colonial Pipeline explosion, U.S. DOE helped by holding regular state coordination calls to provide verbal and written updates. This made coordination easier on individual state responses, such as driver hour waivers for motor fuel carriers.

Over time, we have vastly improved our information systems. For example, if we hear of a fuel shortage in a particular area, we can drill down to the gas station level and give them a call, or call the local emergency management agency. We can assess critical infrastructure, the age and demographics of the population, the weight capacity of nearby bridges, and other critical information.

What I hope you take away from today's hearing is that it is critical to ensure a nationwide network of energy emergency response personnel from the boots on the ground all the way up to Washington, D.C. As the grid becomes more complex, it is even more critical. State energy offices like Georgia that are leading ESF-12 have built the long-term, positive relationships needed with electric utility and fuel companies to effectively plan and respond to hurricanes, tornados, ice storms, and other emergencies. Resilience is about relationships, knowing stakeholder's roles, practicing our plans to test them, and exploring mitigation opportunities.

An example of improved relationships and coordination with the federal government occurred last month. A colleague and I were invited to speak at a FEMA office in Atlanta where U.S. DOE was holding a training for federal ESF-12 employees. A state representative from South Carolina was present to talk with them about what they can expect to see and do if they are deployed to a state operations center. Coordinated training efforts like this build relationships in advance of emergencies, which is very important. Additionally, tabletop exercises simulating energy disruptions that cross state lines are important to challenge plans and to fix vulnerabilities that otherwise become problematic in real time.

Early this year, Governor Nathan Deal announced \$50 million in funding to establish the Georgia Cyber Innovation and Training Center in Augusta, Georgia, expanding upon the capabilities of the U.S. Army's Cyber Command at Fort Gordon. The center will be a state owned cyber range that brings together academia, private industry, and government. It will establish cybersecurity standards across state and local agencies with the capability to develop and practice protocols for responding to cyber threats. The facility

will be focused on training, education, and research and development. It will act as an incubator for cyber security startup companies. This concept is designed to challenge professionals and systems in a safe and protected setting in preparation for cyber incidents.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the importance of funding for energy assurance planning activities, which is a component of the State Energy Program. I hope you can see from my testimony that the funding is a critical resource for helping states like Georgia prepare for and respond to energy emergencies.

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