



TESTIMONY

OF

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BEFORE

THE

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE -
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ON

“Potential DHS Shutdown Impacts”

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Washington, D.C.

Chairman Amodei, Ranking Member Cuellar, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on potential shutdown impacts at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). I am Gregg Phillips, Associate Administrator for the Office of Response and Recovery, and I look forward to our conversation.

Over the last year, under the leadership of President Trump and Secretary Noem, FEMA continues to transition into a lean, deployable force that empowers State and local governments to lead disaster response and recovery. No longer is FEMA the bloated, DC-centric, bureaucratic organization that has failed to deliver for the American people. After years of mismanagement and mission drift, the agency is now refocused on its core mission.

Additionally, FEMA and the Department instituted sweeping reforms to its grant programs, eliminating egregious waste, fraud, and abuse and the misuse of taxpayer dollars. Under this Administration, Americans come first. Gone are the days of ideologically motivated projects, the use of FEMA funds to house illegal aliens in luxury hotels, and initiatives that don't save lives or protect property. FEMA is now focused on serving American taxpayers after disasters strike—in their hour of greatest need.

In just the first year of this Administration, red tape has been cut and processes have been updated. In recent days, DHS and FEMA led an immediate and coordinated response to an historic severe winter weather emergency that simultaneously impacted 30 states. FEMA funneled critical resources directly to states in support of governors and emergency managers and staged more than 300 generators, 7 million meals, 3 million liters of water, and over 650,000 blankets at sites across the country. Finally, FEMA ensured that its 28 Urban Search and Rescue teams were on standby to assist. Had this winter storm happened under a lapsed appropriation, coordination with state partners and movement of resources could have lagged.

Under a lapse in appropriations, FEMA will continue carrying out its lifesaving mission for supporting disaster response efforts. FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund has sufficient balances to continue emergency response activities for the foreseeable future, and lifesaving and life-sustaining activities are an excepted activity under DHS's lapse plan. That said, if a catastrophic disaster occurred, the Disaster Relief Fund would be seriously strained.

A government shutdown would severely disrupt FEMA's ability to reimburse states for disaster relief costs and to support recovery from disasters. Delays in deploying financial assistance to affected communities could hinder timely disaster recovery efforts. States and communities will be forced to wait for long-term response work to continue.

A lapse in appropriations would also result in the furlough of many FEMA employees, limiting the agency's ability to coordinate effectively with state, local, tribal, and territorial partners. This will hinder communication, planning, and joint operations, affecting disaster relief outcomes and complicating recovery efforts. Crippling FEMA's central operations and recovery-related work will come at the expense of the American people.

FEMA plays a central role in supporting continuity of government, consequence management, and national security missions. A delay in yearlong funding could undermine our readiness for

major incidents, including terrorism or large-scale disasters, by disrupting critical preparedness and response activities.

A government shutdown will erode public trust in the federal government's ability to respond to emergencies. Even though emergency response activities will continue during a shutdown, communities may feel vulnerable and unsupported during critical times, which could have lasting effects on public confidence and resilience.

Finally, not only is hurricane season quickly approaching, but FEMA continues to prepare for and respond to other threats like flooding, wildfires, and the recent winter storm. Without appropriation, this long-term planning and coordination with state and local partners will be irrevocably impacted. For example, a lapse in funding will cause significant disruptions to training for first responders such as the cancellation of resident courses at the National Disaster and Emergency Management University in Emmitsburg, MD. The importance of these trainings cannot be measured, and their absence will be felt in our local communities.

In emergency management, time is always the most important resource.

In summary, a federal government shutdown would have far-reaching and serious consequences for FEMA's operations and for the nation's ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. I urge the Committee to consider these impacts as it deliberates on measures to ensure the continuity of FEMA's vital mission.

Thank you for your support and opportunity to appear before you today, I look forward to your questions.