

Opening Statement (as prepared) – Chairman Henry Cuellar (D-TX)
Subcommittee on Emergency Communications, Preparedness, and Response
Committee on Homeland Security
Markup of H.R. 3837, H.R. 2980, H.R. 3978
November 3, 2009

The subcommittee is meeting this afternoon to consider three bills that support our first-responders and make certain that they have the resources necessary to keep our communities safe.

The first bill, which I have introduced, is H.R. 3980, the Redundancy Elimination and Enhanced Performance for Preparedness Grants Act. It is vital that FEMA be able to determine how its homeland security grant programs are building and sustaining capabilities to prepare for and protect against acts of terrorism.

It became clear at last week's subcommittee hearing that FEMA has not made much progress in developing performance metrics for homeland security grants.

Instead, FEMA has imposed unnecessary reporting requirements on grantees that do little to help the agency determine how federal grants are improving the nation's preparedness.

My legislation would direct FEMA to identify and eliminate unnecessary reporting requirements, rules and regulations for homeland security grants. It would also direct FEMA to develop a strategy for establishing performance metrics for its grants.

Finally, the bill would require FEMA to complete a program assessment for each homeland security grant program. FEMA would need to report back to this committee on implementation within 120 days.

This bill is a common-sense approach to ensuring FEMA can track its progress in keeping our nation safe.

The second bill we are considering this afternoon is sponsored by our Ranking Member, Mr. Rogers. H.R. 3978, the First Responder Anti-Terrorism Training Resources Act would permit the Center for Domestic Preparedness (Center) to receive donations of goods and services that help the Center fulfill its mission to train first-responders.

Other government agencies have this authority and it is appropriate that the Center in Alabama have it as well.

The third bill is H.R. 3837, the Strengthening and Updating Resources and Equipment Act. This bill, sponsored by Ms. Kilroy, would overturn FEMA's new policy disallowing State and local governments from using preparedness grants to keep vital homeland security equipment operational.

State and local governments are not in the financial position to suddenly assume the costs of keeping sophisticated homeland security equipment operational.

Members of this Subcommittee have heard loud and clear from their States and Districts about the negative consequences FEMA's policy will have on our homeland security posture. I strongly support H.R. 3837 and urge the subcommittee to send it to the full Committee.

Again, all three bills being considered today are straight-forward and will help our State and local partners keep this nation safe. I thank Mr. Rogers' for his cooperation and hope that we can pass all three measures this afternoon.