

**International Association of Emergency Managers
National Association of Counties
National Association of Development Organizations
National Conference of State Legislatures
National Emergency Management Association
National League of Cities
The Council of State Governments
U.S. Conference of Mayors**

May 10, 2006

The Honorable Judd Gregg
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Room 393 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Homeland Security
Room 311 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Gregg and Ranking Member Byrd,

As Congress begins to consider appropriations bills, state and local governments urge you to address the necessary federal funding to build a national emergency management capability through state and local programs. We are concerned about a proposed cut to the only all-hazards emergency management program, the Emergency Management Performance Grant Program (EMPG). In light of immediate concerns for our nation's all-hazards preparedness, we not only urge you to restore the funds to the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG), but also request that you consider a \$52 million increase over the FY 06 appropriated amount to build emergency management capacity at the state and local level. This increase would serve as a down-payment on the current \$260 million shortfall to the EMPG program as identified by the National Emergency Management Association's 2004 Biennial Survey. Since that survey was completed, state and local governments are faced with additional requirements such as adopting the National Response Plan, implementing and training responders on the National Incident Management System, requirements to comply with the Homeland Security Presidential Directive on Preparedness, reviews and updates of emergency evacuation plans and more. The emergency management planning process brings public safety communities together on necessary multi-agency, multi-discipline activities, including preparation and response.

EMPG is the backbone of the nation's emergency management system and builds state and local emergency management capabilities. EMPG ensures a national system of emergency management and is used for personnel, planning, training, exercises, warning systems, operations centers, public outreach, coordination and other functions essential to effective mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. Cutting EMPG funding will have a detrimental impact on state and local emergency management programs in a time when state and local governments are desperately needed to plan for and manage the response to terrorist attacks. Emergency managers are the glue that holds all the response agencies together, ensuring a coordinated response and cross-leveling of limited resources to effectively and efficiently manage the consequences of a terrorist attack.

The FY 2007 budget proposal cuts EMPG by \$13.1 million to \$170 million. This cut to emergency management capacity building will have a strong impact on the ability of state and local governments to expand and continue preparedness programs. The current budget constraints coupled with EMPG cuts will have a negative impact on local and state emergency management agencies, including budget cuts and staff lay-offs. NEMA completed a Quick Response Survey in March 2006 to assess the impacts of the proposed cut to the EMPG program. Of the 42 states responding, 90 percent of the states will have to cut staff ranging from one person to more than 50 positions. If the cut is included in the budget: 20 states will have to cut between 1-10 positions; 10 states will have to cut between 11-30 positions; 4 will have to cut between 31-50 positions; and 4 will have to cut more than 50 positions. In the same Quick Response Survey, 83 percent of responding states report that the majority of EMPG funds go to local grants, so the impact of the cut would be greatest on local governments.

We call on you to address state and local preparedness needs by restoring and increasing EMPG funds. We cannot afford to wait another year with another set of natural and man-made disasters for federal assistance to address emergency management needs. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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