



NEWS from the T&I Committee
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives, 2165 Rayburn HOB,
Washington, DC 20515
<http://transportation.house.gov/>
Hon. James L. Oberstar (Minn.), Chairman

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T&I Leaders Introduce FEMA Independence Bill

WASHINGTON – A bill to re-establish the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as an independent, cabinet-level agency was introduced today by Rep. James L. Oberstar (Minn.), the Chairman of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. H.R. 1174, the FEMA Independence Act of 2009, moves FEMA out of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and requires the FEMA Administrator to report directly to the President.

Oberstar was joined as an original cosponsor by Rep. John Mica (Fla.), the Full Committee's Ranking Member, Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D.C.), Chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management, and Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (Fla.), the Subcommittee's Ranking Member.

"Contrary to the views of some people, disasters are not solely local in nature. To respond quickly and effectively to man-made and natural disasters, state and local governments must coordinate in concert with the Federal Government," said Oberstar. "Oversight hearings held by our Committee since 2003 have shown a clear correlation between the absorption of FEMA into DHS and the deterioration of FEMA's effectiveness. It is shameful that, to this day, many citizens and communities in Louisiana have still not recovered from Hurricane Katrina. This bill restores FEMA's ability to be a nimble and effective response agency separate from and independent of DHS."

H.R. 1174 affirms FEMA's mission to reduce the loss of life and property and protect the nation from all hazards by leading and supporting a comprehensive emergency management system of preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation.

"Since FEMA was moved into the unwieldy bureaucracy of DHS in 2003, it has been starved of sufficient funding and experienced personnel," said Norton. "Hurricane Katrina and Rita offer abundant, documented evidence that responses to natural disasters, which overwhelmingly dominate FEMA's agenda, have suffered as a direct result of the agency's placement in DHS bureaucracy. In order to restore FEMA as an effective, successful emergency management agency, we need to reestablish FEMA's flexibility and capacity for quick decision-making, and that will require removing it from DHS."

Specifically, H.R. 1174:

- requires FEMA to be led by an Administrator and a Deputy Administrator with extensive experience in emergency management;
- maintains and strengthens FEMA's regional structure;
- authorizes ten regional offices and three area offices;
- retains within FEMA responsibility for core emergency management programs and functions currently administered by the agency, including FEMA's disaster assistance and other programs under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act; the National Flood Insurance Program; the Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program; the National Dam Safety Program; the U.S. Fire Administration and programs authorized by the Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974; the Emergency Food and Shelter Program; and FEMA's programs for Continuity of Operations and Continuity of Government;
- requires the FEMA Administrator to maintain the National Advisory Council and to retain a Disability Coordinator within the newly-established entity; and
- continues the authorization of the National Integration Center within FEMA.

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