



International Association of Emergency Managers

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IAEM Legislative Alert

House vote next week on FEMA – in DHS or out

To: U.S. Emergency Managers, IAEM
From: Martha Braddock, IAEM Policy Advisor
Subject: **House Floor Vote on FEMA To Be Independent or Stay in DHS**
Date: June 21, 2006

Over the past few months, as a service, we have informed our members about activity in Congress regarding the future status of FEMA. **This alert is to advise you that next week – probably on Tuesday, June 27, 2006 – H.R. 5316, a bill with numerous provisions to strengthen FEMA, will be considered on the House Floor. There also will be a vote on an amendment to this bill to keep FEMA in DHS.**

Background. Most of you are aware that two competing bills were marked up by Committees – H.R. 5316, the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure bill, and H.R. 5351, the House Committee on Homeland Security bill. Both bills include a number of provisions to strengthen FEMA, and both committees gave us opportunities to meet and comment on their bills. One major difference in the two bills is that H.R. 5316 would make FEMA an independent cabinet level agency, and H.R. 5351 would keep FEMA in DHS.

Floor Action:

■ **Currently expected on Tuesday, June 27.**

■ The House leadership has agreed that the “base bill” to be used will be H.R. 5316, the bill of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. Staff of the two committees are working out a compromise version of H.R. 5316 and H.R. 5351.

■ However, the major issue which cannot be agreed on before the floor action will be whether FEMA should stay in DHS or be restored to independent cabinet level status as in H.R. 5316.

■ I am advised that an amendment to H.R. 5316 will be offered, probably by Chairman King of the House Homeland Security Committee, to amend H.R. 5316 to leave FEMA in DHS – but give it “Coast Guard-like” protections.

Position. As an association, IAEM has not taken a position supporting either of the two bills, but has had the position of making it independent or greatly strengthening it. (Reference the Oct. 25, 2005 press release in which [IAEM announced recommendations for improved emergency response](#), and the June 4, 2006 [IAEM position statement on principles for reviewing legislation intended to strengthen FEMA](#) approved at the recent IAEM Mid-Year Meeting.)

However, if you as an individual or state association have a position on whether FEMA should remain in DHS or be independent, you should contact the Washington and District Offices of your Members of the House of Representatives. This is a “watershed” moment for the future of emergency management in the United States; therefore, regardless of which position you take, we urge you to make your opinions known.

As we understand the expected amendment, essentially the action you would request would be one of the following:

- If you support making FEMA independent, you would ask your House Member to vote against the amendment to keep FEMA in DHS.
- If you support keeping FEMA in DHS, you would ask your Member to vote for the amendment.

If you have any questions, contact **Bob Bohlmann**, CEM, IAEM Government Affairs Committee Chairman, at rbohlmann@co.york.me.us, or **Martha Braddock**, IAEM Policy Advisor, at braddock@iaem.com.