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News Release

Local Government Emergency Managers Mourn Senator Robert C. Byrd's Passing

June 28, 2010 (Falls Church, Va.) – U.S. local government emergency managers lost a long time friend and champion of emergency management today with the death of Sen. Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va.) at age 92. Byrd had been a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee since 1959, and was currently serving as the Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security, which has jurisdiction over emergency management.

“Chairman Byrd and his superb staff were constantly working to ensure that we local government emergency managers, as key stakeholders, had an opportunity for input into policy and funding issues related to the preparedness of our local governments,” said Pam L’Heureux, CEM, president of the U.S. Council of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM-USA), and local government emergency manager for Waterboro, Maine. “He recognized the importance of the Emergency Management Performance Grant for building the capacity of our state and local governments to respond to all hazards and we are very grateful for his long time strong support.”

“Being from West Virginia, a disaster prone state, Senator Byrd understood the true value of building and sustaining strong emergency management programs—programs that worked, not just programs that looked good on paper,” said Randall C. Duncan, CEM, chair of the U.S. Government Affairs Committee of IAEM-USA, and a local government emergency manager in Wichita/Sedgwick County, Kan. “He had little patience for emergency management policy directives that came from on high without input from local emergency managers and insisted on consultation.”

Chairman Byrd was a key advocate of the Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act – an effort to strengthen the Federal Emergency Management Agency after Katrina – and he and his staff continued to insist on its implementation.

Senator Byrd’s death is a great loss to our Country, West Virginia, and all the Nation’s emergency managers. He and his staff set the absolute highest standards for public service. We offer our condolences to his family and his wonderful staff.

IAEM-USA, the nation’s largest association of emergency management professionals, is a non-profit professional organization with almost 5,000 members including emergency managers and homeland security professionals at the state and local government levels, tribal nations, the military, colleges and universities, private business and the nonprofit sector. Most of our members are city and county emergency managers who perform the crucial function of coordinating and integrating the efforts at the local level to prepare for, mitigate the effects of, respond to, and recover from all types of disasters including terrorist attacks. Our membership includes emergency managers from large urban areas as well as rural areas. IAEM provides: access to the largest network of emergency management experts who can provide advice and assistance; the Certified Emergency Manager® program; annual scholarships; a comprehensive monthly newsletter; and more. See www.iaem.com.

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