

STATEMENT

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Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee it is a privilege and a pleasure for me to be here today and to give Testimony on "Improving the Nation's Response to Catastrophic Disasters: How to Minimize Costs and Streamline our Emergency Management Programs."

There are numerous items I would like to discuss and would respectfully ask that the hearing record be left open for an additional thirty days for testimony submittal. Because of time I will limit my key points to three (3).

1. Utilize local first responders and recovery efforts.
2. Improve or remove the traditional bureaucratic cycle.
3. Flood Protection is a pre-emptive strike.

1) It is vital for an efficient response to any disaster to utilize local recovery efforts.

Just before Katrina made land-fall, some of the Officials of the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta Levee Board with Headquarters in Clarksdale, Mississippi contacted the Governor's Office and offered their help.

Authority was immediately given and the Levee Board used modified dump-trucks filled with gasoline and diesel fuel and moved South. They were a welcome sight and began moving more of their equipment and personnel to the devastated area and stayed and worked until Thanksgiving or about 90 days. They expended over a million dollars from their Emergency Reserve Fund and were later reimbursed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency for about three-quarters of a million dollars. The larger Levee Boards in the Mississippi River Watershed have the experienced and qualified people and in some cases suitable equipment for work such as initial or advance clean-up and repair following a Catastrophic Disaster and they and other State Chartered Agencies should be used whenever possible. In the case of clean-up and re-habituating following a Disaster, it appears the people with the greatest first-hand information do a better and less expensive job than those from out-side the State or general area affected.

2) The traditional bureaucratic process is not efficient.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) permitting processes have become so cumbersome and bureaucratic that it is difficult at best to maintain efficiency in the critical path of the recovery process. Also, we seemed to have over-looked at the time the fact that the Civil Works portion of the United States Army, Corps of Engineers had been placed under the direction of the Homeland Security Agency and consequently under the Federal Emergency Management Agency. There are several things the Military hold dear such as Duty, Honor, Country and others, such as the Chain of Command. When you look at an Organizational Chart it is quite plain that the Army Corps of Engineers are below both the Homeland Security Agency and FEMA, therefore you had a well-organized, well-led and experienced Agency, that has dealt with Disasters since this Country's beginnings, answering to and taking direction from people inexperienced in the management of a situation of the size and magnitude of the aftermath of Katrina. With all due respect, the Congress needs to remedy this

ridiculous situation before another Disaster strikes this Country.

3) The Nation is in danger at all times from several different Natural Disasters such as Hurricanes, Tornadoes, Earthquakes, Volcano Eruptions and Riverine Flooding. Only Riverine Flooding can be protected against and we that live in the Lower Reaches of the Mississippi River Watershed, in conjunction with the Congress of the United States and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers working together as a threesome, have protected ourselves from that disaster. We have done so with the Mississippi River and Tributaries Project but now our efforts that have extended well over a hundred years all seem to have been in vain. Now the Federal Emergency Management Agency in all it's power and it's lack of experience are dead set on setting the stage for lenders to require the selling to millions of citizens that live in the Valley unwanted and unneeded insurance that protects not against Flooding but if you are lucky and win the arguments with the insurance agents may provide some financial aid after the disaster has done its damage.

I will close by summarizing (1) involve the people closest to the Disaster as much as possible. (2) take a hard look at the organization of the Federal Bureaucracy. (3) protect what can be protected and warn the populous of the dangers that cannot be protected. Refocus our nation on protection before the event at less cost, like the Mississippi River & Tributaries Project which currently has a B/C ratio of 27 to 1.