

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS FOR 2018

HEARING BEFORE A SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS FIRST SESSION

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PART 3 OVERSIGHT OF THE FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY



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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS FOR 2018

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2017

OVERSIGHT OF THE FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

WITNESS

WILLIAM B. LONG, ADMINISTRATOR, FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. CARTER. I call this hearing to order.

Today we are welcoming the administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Mr. Brock Long. We are here to discuss response recovery to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, as well as the wildfires that spread across California. Administrator, thank you very much for being here and for joining us.

The magnitude of disaster activities that we are experiencing this year is basically unprecedented. I want to thank you and the thousands of dedicated FEMA personnel who have deployed and who continue to work tirelessly to help communities and families get back on their feet in every instance devastating events.

Congress has passed two emergency supplementals which have provided an additional \$26 billion to ensure FEMA's ability to respond to immediate aftermath of disasters. Now is the time to shift focus from response to recovery. And while some of these efforts are already underway, there is still a very long road ahead.

Today we look forward to hearing from you on how this third supplemental request, \$23.5 billion, will enable the communities to start down the path, a long path, of long-term recovery.

Mr. Long, before I get to you, I want to introduce Ms. Roybal-Allard, my ranking member who is a good friend, for any comments that she may have.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And good morning, Mr. Administrator, and welcome to your first appearance before the subcommittee. I wish it were not necessitated by the damaging hurricanes that prompted the administration's third emergency supplemental funding request in just the last few months. But we are nevertheless eager to spend some time with you to get your perspective on FEMA's response and recovery activities and the challenges that lie ahead.

I know this has been a difficult time for your agency. You were at FEMA for only a few months when Hurricane Harvey struck the Gulf Coast, followed close behind by Irma and Marie. And I would be remiss if I did not mention the wildfires that devastated large swaths of California, my home State.

Mr. Administrator, we want to help support the efforts of FEMA personnel, and we want to make sure that FEMA's programs are working well to support recovery efforts, particularly in Puerto Rico because of the level of devastation there and the fiscal challenges it was already facing.

Again, we appreciate your joining us this morning, and I look forward to a productive discussion.

Mr. LONG. Thank you.

Mr. CARTER. We are also joined by the full committee ranking member, Mrs. Lowey.

Mrs. Lowey, you are now recognized for any comments you would like to make.

Mrs. LOWEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate Chairman Carter holding this hearing.

Administrator Long, thank you for being here and for all your hard work assisting the States and U.S. territories that have suffered recently from natural disasters. There have been more than 50 major disaster declarations so far in 2017. Twenty of them were for disasters that occurred since your confirmation, including Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria.

After Superstorm Sandy, it was very difficult to garner support for the disaster assistance we needed. And I remember that very, very clearly. There are similar concerns now about the adequacy of funding proposed by the administration for this supplemental, particularly with regard to Puerto Rico which has faced significant fiscal challenges for some time.

It is my hope that today we can have a productive discussion about how FEMA can best help those impacted by Harvey, Irma, and Maria with a particular focus on how to assist Puerto Rico with vital repairs and improvements to its power system, water infrastructure, transportation system, and other important infrastructure.

The traditional FEMA programs will only bring Puerto Rico just so far, and it will be important for us to understand what the limits are and what additional flexibilities might be helpful. For recovery beyond the scope of FEMA programs, we need to understand FEMA's role in determining unmet needs that will inform assistance from other Federal agencies.

It simply is not acceptable to restore infrastructure and public facilities to predisaster conditions, especially in Puerto Rico which suffered unprecedented damages. We must use assistance funding to mitigate the impacts of future disasters or else we will find ourselves in this exact position in short order when the next hurricane blows through forcing taxpayers to pay more because investments were not made at an appropriate time. Resiliency is the only sensible path forward.

So, Administrator Long, again, I really do want to thank you for being here today, and I look forward to this discussion.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CARTER. Thank you Mrs. Lowey.

Mr. Culberson has requested an opening statement. Mr. Culberson.

Mr. CULBERSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The people of Houston and Southeast Texas suffered more than we have in any—many storms, in certainly my memory. We had over 52 inches of rain, over 150,000 homes flood, 200,000 apartment units, a number of people are—tens of thousands of people in my district are living on the second floor of their homes with the first floor torn out, the sheetrock torn out, because they don't have anywhere else to go.

All of us are immensely grateful to the work that FEMA has done to help the people of Houston to Southeast Texas who suffered from this catastrophic rain event, and to all the volunteers who came from all over the country. One of the silver linings of this storm were the people that just showed up spontaneously from all over the country with food, supplies, water. I am especially grateful to the Cajun Navy, the people of Louisiana who just showed up with boats and food and jambalaya to help pull people out of their houses. I didn't even know there was such a thing as the Cajun Navy.

We all found ourselves in Houston doing what needed to be done to help our neighbors and friends, and it is one of the many, many reasons I am so proud to represent that wonderful community of people who all look first to each other, to our family, to our neighbors, to our faith, and our State to help each other.

But the Federal Government's role is essential. And, Mr. Long, we appreciate the work that FEMA has done. We are grateful for the help that you provided. But a lot more has to be done. And without even directly addressing the Disaster Relief Fund, I want to say at the outset that the Office of Management and Budget's request is woefully inadequate, it is embarrassing, it is deeply upsetting to the people of Texas to see that the largest housing disaster in the history of the United States of America, there is not one dime recommended for housing relief in the OMB's request.

So we are very grateful to Speaker Ryan, to Chairman Frelinghuysen for opening up this process to be sure that the Appropriations Committee is the one that makes the decision on what the people of our districts and the Nation need in response to this hurricane. The Constitution vests that authority in Congress and on this committee. We always have and we will once again make the decision on what is necessary to heal the people of Texas, the people of Florida, and the people of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands from these terrible storms.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing and look forward to working with you and my colleagues to be sure the people of the United States who suffered are made whole.

Thank you.

Mr. CARTER. Thank you, Mr. Culberson.

Administrator Long, at this time, you are recognized to make your statement. I would ask that you try to limit yourself to 5 minutes today because we have got a lot of questions that are going to coming your way.

Mr. LONG. Absolutely.

Mr. Chairman, Madam Member, and members of the committee, thank you. It is an honor to be here. Today marks the end of the 2017 hurricane season, and it has been—the word “unprecedented” doesn't do it justice.

I want to start by thanking members of the committee but also members of Congress for quickly considering the first two supplementals and pushing them through. It is vital funding, and we are in the middle of a third request which I will get to here in a minute.

I have been in office about 5 months. For 97 days, we have been actively responding around-the-clock. And not only to Harvey, Irma, Maria, as well as the California wildfires. But right now we are working 31 disasters across this country in 21 different jurisdictions. My staff is tapped out. They work around-the-clock and bust their rear ends every day to help those who are in need. And we are doing the best that we can do in trying to move as quick as we can. This has been the longest activation in FEMA's history. And I have to say, I am extremely proud to work with the members of FEMA. And we have got a long way to go in the spirit of improvement.

I am here in the spirit of improvement. I have many ideas that I have not had a chance to catch my breath and come to you with. Some of them I can do with a stroke of a pen through my own authority; some of them are going to require changes to the Stafford Act. But to put this into context, just those four events, Harvey to the devastating California wildfires, impacted 25 million people. In a 97-day time period, we put almost 5 million people into the Individual Assistance Program. To put that into context, in that short of a timeframe, that is greater than Sandy, Katrina, Wilma, and Rita combined. And it is a tenfold increase over what we did last year for the entire fiscal year.

And while these statistics, I could go on where we put 80,000 people in hotels in just Texas for Harvey alone, I could go on with those statistics. The Nation needs to stop, take a deep breath, and figure out how we collectively become more resilient. Not just FEMA, but it is the whole community.

Sir, as you mentioned how do we better utilize the whole community from the Cajun Navy all the way to the Federal Emergency Management Agency? And I didn't come up here to do the status quo. I am ready to change the face of emergency management and the way that we attack our resiliency in this Nation, and it is going to require your help as well.

Since August 25, we have received roughly \$42 billion when you include not only the DRF funding but the NFIP debt forgiveness as well as community disaster loan funding. And now we are asking for \$23.5 billion. This is a tremendous amount of money.

Protecting the taxpayer dollars is of utmost importance as well as saving lives. I get it. In this third supplemental, we are asking for some special provisions that I need the Congress to consider. We need outcome-based planning, recovery planning, when we enter into these disasters. We are asking for Puerto Rico to have an integrated recovery plan with clear outcomes so that we are not just throwing money at recovery, we have an outcome in mind going into this.

The next thing is is that I am also asking for additional authorities, particularly around Puerto Rico. The Stafford Act allows me to rebuild communities to a predisaster standard which would not be prudent in this situation. We are facing massive amounts of de-

ferred maintenance in the infrastructure and antiquated infrastructure. The average age of the power plants is 44 years old. If you look at it globally what the average age of a power plant is, it is typically 18 years old, as I understand it.

So when FEMA comes into this situation, I will need additional authorities to be able to put back Puerto Rico in a resilient or prudent manner so that we are not here again having this same committee hearing about not only Maria. But the real question for me is, it is time to question what is FEMA's role in disaster response and recovery? What can we adequately handle as an agency versus what the real roles and responsibility of the whole community should be from State to local governments. And let's hit the reset button, and let's carve out what—every level of government and the whole community should be responsible for.

FEMA is never designed to be the first responder and the only responder in a disaster. But in many cases, that is where we find ourselves, and we have got to fix that problem. Doing so fixes the whole community issues that we face and bring the a level of resilience.

I have numerous ideas starting first with recovery is too complex. It is too fragmented. Funding comes from too many different Federal agencies down to the local and State level, and it is too difficult to understand what you are entitled to, how to use this funding in concert with one another. And it leads to deobligations, confusion, and more frustration on your part, the citizens' part, and the disaster survivors' part.

This is the time to fix those problems and streamline the Federal Government's support down through a local governor to the local level to achieve the governor and the local government's goals and responsibilities, not my goals and roles and responsibilities.

We have to increase predisaster mitigation. You have to get hit to have access to billions of dollars or hundreds of millions of dollars of mitigation funding. That is reverse. It is backwards. It doesn't make sense. We need to move 404 section money out of the Stafford Act to the blue sky day up-front place where people can plan out mitigation strategies rather than having to get hit and then figure out how to do mitigation. It is a regressive formula. It needs to be changed.

We have to ensure that State and local governments have their own ability to push out life-sustaining commodity distribution for water and meals. It cannot be solely on the shoulders of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to push food and water out. Every State should have a capability. Large cities should have their own capability. Our support should be designed to backfill that community, not supplant it fully.

We have to make sure that we find low to no cost ways to truly implement a true culture of preparedness within our citizenry. We don't have it. And it is time to hit the reset button on how we become more resilient, not only at the citizen level, because citizens are the true first responder. They are the true first responder in an active shooter event, and they are when a tornado hits or when a flood occurs. We need to give tangible skills from CPR to how to shut off water valves to how to be properly insured, not only as a homeowner but as a business owner.

We have to fix the NFIP business process. I run a program that is structurally broken every day. It goes into debt every time we have a major event, and I have to come ask for supplementals. We continue to go into debt. Katrina forced it into debt. Sandy forced it into debt. Harvey and Irma forced it into debt. And we got to fix the structure of that framework, and we have to ensure not only affordability but fix the structure. I run a program that is not financially solvent.

I have about 100 more ideas I could share, and I look forward to working you. But I am here in the spirit of improvement. I look forward to having a fruitful discussion today.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Long follows:]

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM B. LONG

Good morning, Chairman Carter, Ranking Member Roybal-Allard, and Members of the Committee. My name is Brock Long, and I am the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). I would like to thank you for the opportunity to discuss FEMA's supplemental appropriations request before Congress and this hurricane season's federal response and recovery efforts.

I have been in office for just over 5 months, and I am proud to be part of an agency that works every day to help communities reduce the risks associated with future disasters, as well as to assist disaster survivors all across the country. In this short time, our Nation has faced four catastrophic disasters. Hurricane Harvey struck Texas with both strong wind and record setting rainfall. Then, Hurricane Irma swept through the Caribbean, striking the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Georgia, and the entire state of Florida. Hurricane Maria followed, striking a devastating blow to the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. Weeks later, nearly two dozen large wildfires burned more than 200,000 acres of state and private land in northern California.

These historic disasters—each historic in its own right—have compelled FEMA to push its limits. These events have also required action by Congress, actions that entrust FEMA to coordinate effective and efficient response and recovery missions, to provide oversight of the taxpayers' investment in these activities, and to maintain a highly regarded and well trained cadre of employees. Today, I would like to share with you not only the experiences of recent months, but also the financial and legislative priorities that will drive a successful recovery.

2017 HURRICANE SEASON

FEMA works quietly, day in and day out, across the country responding to many disasters that do not get national attention. Prior to Hurricane Harvey making landfall on August 25, 2017, FEMA had 17 Joint Field Offices working 28 Presidentially-declared disasters. FEMA, our partner agencies in the federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, in addition to vital volunteer relief organizations and the private sector, work in concert, with unity of effort, to serve the needs of disaster survivors.

To say this hurricane season has been historic is an understatement. We had four hurricanes make landfall this season, three of which have been major hurricanes (Harvey, Irma, and Maria).

Since Hurricane Harvey made landfall in Texas, the President has made 16 Major Disaster declarations and 14 Emergency Declarations, while FEMA has authorized 25 Fire Management Assistance Grant declarations. Hurricane Irma was unique not only because it struck both the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, but also because it struck the entire State of Florida, including the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Hurricane Maria, following in quick succession, then struck the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, more than 1,000 nautical miles from the mainland United States, devastating an area with already fragile infrastructure and facing challenging economic circumstances. In a span of 25 days, FEMA and our partners deployed tens of thousands of personnel across 270,000 square miles in three different FEMA Regions.

The impacts of these events are substantial. Roughly 25.8 million people were affected by these three storms - eight percent of the entire U.S. population. As of November 13, 2017, more than four and a half million survivors have registered for FEMA assistance, more than those who registered after Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Wilma and Sandy combined. FEMA's Individual and Households Program (IHP) has thus far approved more than \$2 billion in disaster assistance to respond to the three hurricanes, and I expect this number to continue to grow. As of mid-November, National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) policyholders filed approximately 120,000 claims, and the NFIP has paid over \$4 billion to them.

In just over 30 days, FEMA increased our call center capacity to more than 10 times our State level. Call centers receive registrations for FEMA's Individual Assistance program from survivors, and they also serve as a helpline for those sur-

vivors who have questions about their applications. Additionally, FEMA more than quadrupled our cadre of inspectors, who validate damages to an applicant's home and property. We will continue to expand these capacities each day for as long as the mission requires.

FEMA alone cannot deliver assistance to this vast number of survivors. Unity of effort is required for disaster response and recovery on any scale, but especially in response to this historic season. When emergency managers call for unity of effort, we mean that all levels of government, non-profit organizations, private sector businesses, and survivors must work together, each drawing upon their unique skills and capabilities, to meet the needs of disaster survivors.

State, local, tribal, and territorial governments, along with the residents in the affected areas, are the true first responders. Non-profit organizations, like those that are members of the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (NVOADs), provide crucial services to sustain lives while the rest of the response and recovery infrastructure can be established by emergency managers for longer-term needs. The private sector also plays a critical role in disasters, as businesses work to restore critical services and donate their time and resources in close coordination with emergency management personnel to help communities rebound in the wake of disasters. The whole community must be, and is, engaged, involved, and coordinated.

For our part on the federal level, FEMA called upon not only the vast majority of our own workforce, but also engaged over 3,800 other federal employees to participate in the "Surge Capacity Force", both by tapping into the Department of Homeland Security's existing program and expanding participation in that program to all Federal agencies. This is significant. FEMA employees come to FEMA knowing they will be deployed into disaster areas, work in austere conditions, and assist survivors. That is part of our job at FEMA. However, when personnel from outside FEMA volunteer for the Surge Capacity Force, they volunteer to leave their jobs and families, receive just-in-time training, and work in an environment that is completely unfamiliar and outside of their normal job responsibilities.

I am incredibly grateful to my interagency colleagues from across the Federal government for supporting this important initiative, and for allowing their hardworking and dedicated personnel to support disaster survivors who have been impacted by these historic events. Over 22,300 members of the Federal workforce were deployed to Texas, Florida, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. This includes 13,892 staff from various offices of the Department of Defense, including the military services. We could not do this without them.

This unprecedented hurricane season has truly tested us as a Nation and tested many of our assumptions about what works in disaster response and recovery. While each year the hurricane season comes to an end on November 30, the lessons from the response and recovery operations that we are performing this year, under incredibly difficult circumstances, will transform the field of emergency management forever.

THE DISASTER RELIEF FUND

Under current law, the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF) is the source of the funding that enables FEMA to direct, coordinate, manage, and fund response, recovery, and mitigation efforts associated with major disasters and emergencies that receive a Presidential declaration pursuant to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act). Therefore, FEMA's ability to provide essential services and financial assistance to overwhelmed state, local, tribal, and territorial governments depends on having sufficient balances in the DRF.

The DRF helped fund response needs related to hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria and will also help fund recovery efforts for those events. As of November 13, 2017, FEMA obligated approximately \$13.7 billion to support response to and recovery from these hurricanes. Adequate funding for the DRF is essential to FEMA's ability to carry out its mission.

Because FEMA had only \$2 billion on hand to fund major disaster operations at the time Harvey struck, the Agency took extraordinary measures to maintain the DRF's solvency during the first two weeks of the incident response, including temporarily suspending payments for long-term recovery projects (a policy known as Immediate Needs Funding), and reprogramming a net total of \$750 million from the base category of the DRF (which funds, among other things, emergency declarations) to the Majors Disaster category.

To date, Congress has passed two supplemental appropriations bills that enable FEMA to continue helping communities respond to and recover from Harvey, Irma, and Maria. I am concerned, however, that use of emergency appropriations like

those passed on September 8 and October 24 may become the new normal due to a decline in the amount of funding available for natural disasters since Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 that is projected to continue.

Currently, Congress proactively funds the DRF through annual appropriations in anticipation of future disaster activity. This mechanism, known as the Disaster Relief Allowable Adjustment, or more simply the Disaster Cap, was successful in decreasing dependence on supplemental appropriations since it was put into place with the passage of the Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA).

Funding available under the Disaster Cap is recalculated each year based on a formula established by the BCA that in part utilizes a ten year average. It is important to note that the Nation went 11 years without a major hurricane making land-fall, which has affected the funding available to the DRF. However, the Disaster Cap will continue to fall or remain flat over the next few years due to the good fortune of relatively low disaster spending between 2012 and 2016, and the fact that the Disaster Cap does not take into account emergency funding FEMA will receive in FY 2018.

This drop in the Disaster Cap could result in constraints on future DRF appropriations and, consequently, insufficient balances in the DRF to support mission operations. This dynamic could lead to an increasing reliance on emergency supplemental appropriations to support basic disaster missions as soon as this fiscal year or FY 2019. We would like to work together with Congress to provide a fix to the mechanism that funds the DRF.

THIRD REQUEST FOR SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS RELATED TO THE 2017 HURRICANE SEASON

On November 17, 2017, the President transmitted a \$43.996 billion emergency supplemental appropriations request to provide the resources necessary for the recovery efforts related to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria. This constitutes the third request from the Administration as a result of the devastating Atlantic hurricane season. This fall, Congress has already provided \$35.8 billion in funding and cancelled \$16 billion in NFIP debt to meet urgent emergency response needs in affected areas and longer-term recovery requirements. It sends a very clear message: We are committed to the long-term recovery of all impacted individuals as well as conducting this recovery in a fiscally responsible and prudent manner.

While this is an FY 2018 supplemental request, it does not represent either a schedule or a deadline for recovery efforts. Providing the necessary funding and authorities requested by the Administration will address ongoing recovery efforts in Texas and Florida, as well as the medium-term response and recovery missions in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

In terms of meeting FEMA's mission, the Administration's package includes \$23.5 billion for the Disaster Relief Fund. This funding is critical to finance ongoing recovery and stabilization operations, support survivors, and support estimates for permanent public infrastructure work associated with recovery from Hurricanes Harvey and Irma as well as initial permanent public infrastructure work estimates for Hurricane Maria. This supplemental request would also allow a portion of the Disaster Relief Funds be made available for Community Disaster loans to support the operating liquidity needs of affected areas.

We ask the Congress to act quickly upon this request.

NEXT STEPS AND CONCLUSION

At FEMA, we seek constant improvement to better support America's disaster survivors, citizens, first responders, and communities. Responding to and recovering from any disaster is a whole community effort that relies on the strength of federal, state, local, and tribal governments as well as non-governmental entities and individuals, in addition to FEMA. The unprecedented events of this past fall are no exception.

The response to the 2017 hurricane season continues to provide me the opportunity to test the validity of many of the ideas I had coming into this job. We look forward to collaborating with Congress in the coming months to implement lessons learned, as well as gather any additional feedback that you may have. I look forward to your questions. Again, thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee today.

Mr. CARTER. Thank you. That was very spectacular. I love that outside-the-box thinking.

Let me remind our panel here that we are going to be on the clock, and we are going to try to stick to it. I will do a little courtesy over but not a whole lot.

Well, that was a blitz, and I would love to hear the other 100 ideas you have got. And let's hope we can figure out a way to do those things.

We have been—and that is—so you start off with kind of the big picture, and that is right where we need to start. A series of questions concerning the big picture. What is the status of FEMA at this time and the impacted States' response and recovery in this year's hurricanes? What do you anticipate your biggest challenges will be in the coming months? And how do you plan to address them? With more than 80 percent of FEMA's workforce currently deployed to support ongoing disaster response activities, are you concerned with FEMA's ability to respond if another catastrophic event occurs?

Mr. LONG. Great question.

In regard to Harvey and Irma, we are rolling forward in the initial recovery and long-term recovery phases. The biggest challenge that face us is housing. Obviously. Congressman, you hit the nail on the head. There aren't enough manufactured home and travel trailers and, in some cases, hotels to service. And we are never going to be able to move fast enough to put people back in their homes.

FEMA is not a housing expert, by the way. I often question whether or not FEMA should be in charge of disaster recovery housing. And that is another discussion that we should probably have. But the bottom line is it is on my plate. I recognize it. We work with it every day. Housing is tremendously different, not just from Texas, but the California wildfires, which is one of the most disturbing events I have ever been a part of in my career, based on the urban nature of those wildland fires. The housing mission is tremendously different there, because there is nothing to rebuild. It has been burned completely down versus where we have to go into Harvey, and we have to understand what can be rebuilt versus where we need to bring in manufactured homes or how we transition people out of hotels to other options. Rent them if you got them, apartments that may be available. This is the biggest issue that we face.

In Puerto Rico, obviously it is the power. It is an antiquated power system that we are rapidly trying to figure out day in and day out on how to get in there. The complexities of it being an island and the logistical complexities adds to it. Everything that we do in Puerto Rico is hard. That is not a complaint. It is just a reality. It is hard. So power and housing is also the problem in Puerto Rico. When you are trying to fix homes in Puerto Rico, just simply putting a blue tarp on a house is not easy, because there is not a structure to connect it to. You have to first rebuild the structure before you put the blue tarp on it. And in many cases, it is trying to figure out who actually owns the home. Those are the issues that are there.

The other thing that I recognize is we are having to delicately deal with billions of dollars of taxpaying money. One of the things that I have recognized that we have to improve is oversight and

grants management. Grants management is the responsibility of the whole community, not just FEMA. We have got to increase the grants management oversight at the State, local, and subgrantee level, provide better and more training to how this funding works. But it goes back to the thing that we have to solve is the problem of fragmented recovery from different types of money coming from HUD or FEMA or Federal highway, wherever it comes from, with different policies, different tags, different rules. And it just sets everybody up for failure in the long run.

And we never train people how to utilize the funding that comes down from the Federal Government in the best way possible. Here is what you are entitled to. Here is what your goals are. Let's grab the money you need. Let's put it to work in concert with one another in an efficient and effective manner. There is a lot that we have to talk about. Housing is going to be the most difficult mission that I have.

Mr. CARTER. Well, that was an excellent response. I am about to run out of time. I will try—to respond to this year's disaster activity. In my understanding, \$23.5 billion requested in the supplemental addresses all disaster requirements for Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, but only fiscal year 2018 costs for Hurricane Maria.

Why does this request only include funding in 2018 for Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands? And do you plan to submit another supplemental in addition to support these disasters?

Mr. LONG. That is another excellent question, because we are performing our due diligence. It is hard to project what the true cost is going to be after fiscal year 2018.

As we transition to recovery and why we are asking Puerto Rico to have an integrated outcome-based plan for their recovery effort, it helps us to project what we need. We also, as we get into recovery, based on what a governor may ask for, the different programs that are made available, when they turn those on, we look at trends, we look at the programs that are on. And we deliberately go in and try to estimate out. I think if we go beyond 2018, I don't think that the estimates I could provide you would be remotely accurate based on the work, and that is why we have decided to stay there.

Mr. CARTER. Thank you. Ms. Roybal-Allard.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Administrator Long, the administration has proposed giving you discretion to waive the predisaster condition limitation on public assistant grants for Puerto Rico and to fund the repair of or replacement of public facility components that weren't damaged if replacing them is essential to restoring the overall facility. Can you talk a little bit more about why this authority is needed in the case of Puerto Rico? Do you expect that it will help speed up recovery efforts? And did you consider extending this authority to the U.S. Virgin Islands as well? And if not, why not?

Mr. LONG. In regard to Puerto Rico, I am concerned that I don't have the authority to implement recovery in a manner that is needed, because where FEMA gets in trouble is when we start fixing issues that were not damaged as a result of the actual disaster. So if you take the roadway system inside Puerto Rico, there are plenty of deferred maintenance issues where the roadway system was not

maintained, there were damages that were there before the storm. And in some cases, as a result of the storm passing through, the damages are exponentially increased because of a lack of maintenance. If I fix infrastructure that has not been maintained, then OIG comes back and, rightfully so, says, "Hold on a minute. Is this truly the Federal Government's responsibility, or should this be on the backs of the local and the State governments?"

But in this case with Puerto Rico, we are running into so many deferred maintenance issues in regards to the entire infrastructure and antiquated systems that I don't think you can put it back to a predisaster condition. Right now I am working under the emergency authorities that I have to prevent public health emergencies and future loss of life.

But once we get into the permanent work that is required to actually rebuild to a higher code standard, for example, just putting the CONUS standard for the power grid on to Puerto Rico is greater than the pre-storm condition that we found the power grid in to begin with.

And so this is why we are asking for those authorities. I need protection when it comes to putting Puerto Rico back in a more resilient manner so that we are not sitting here again having this discussion.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. If you get that authority, how will you decide when to use it? And do you anticipate that you will broadly use it, or will you use it only in certain circumstances or for certain kinds of projects?

Mr. LONG. So right now we don't have a full understanding as we are still in the response phase of Puerto Rico. What we know as we get into what is called permanent work, or the different categories, categories C through G, like fixing the public infrastructure, we know that we are going to run into it. We are already in the emergency work trying to get into areas of the power grid where you are having to do debris removal and brush removal because of overgrowth. And that is deferred maintenance which delays the recovery time. We know we are going to see it. We are anticipating it going into fiscal year 2018 into the permanent work issues of recovery.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. OK. And under this authority or other existing authorities, will FEMA be able to fully fund the Federal share of a more modern, efficient, and resilient type of electrical generation and grid system for Puerto Rico, or will Puerto Rico only be eligible to receive an amount sufficient to construct a brand-new version of its current system which would still be vulnerable to future hurricanes? In other words, will FEMA funding reflect the higher cost of a new system that would mitigate against future disaster costs?

Mr. LONG. All of that is being taken into consideration. I am going to have to respond to you in writing on all of the issues that are there. Obviously the problem that we are facing in Puerto Rico is the liquidity issue when it comes to the reimbursement or to the cost-share issues that you are referencing. The bottom line is that liquidity is standing in the way of doing things in a normal fashion, but I will have to get back to you on the specifics of that question.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. What is your understanding about other Federal resources that might be available to Puerto Rico to cover any gap between what FEMA will provide and the added cost of more resilient infrastructure?

Mr. LONG. And this goes back to what I refer to as fragmented recovery. Every day we have what are called recovery meetings with our partners across the recovery perspective. And other agencies are in the joint field office. We are having those meetings daily when it comes to how our funding works together and where our authorities begin and end. And so, for example, we were in a very detailed conversation with Secretary Carson at HUD yesterday about housing and how FEMA can handle the housing for homes less than 50 percent damaged, but after that, it is going to be more of a HUD mission. And so we are looking at areas to hand that off.

I still believe that, as a Nation, as a result of going through this, we can still do a much better job of streamlining all of these programs in assigning authority that is clear.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. OK. Thank you.

Mr. LONG. Thank you.

Mr. CARTER. Mrs. Lowey.

Mrs. LOWEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing. And after hearing from Mr. Brock, I just want to say that I will sleep better tonight. I am so impressed.

Mr. LONG. Thank you.

Mrs. LOWEY. And it seems to me you are handling this just right. And the only question I have before I get to my questions, when you are talking about rebuilding to standards and—whether it is homes or the electric grid or the highways or the roads, I was there with the Speaker not too long ago, I do hope, if we ever get this budget process going, we will be able to give you a number that will provide for adequate funding to do this, because I understand, as you are saying, you have to combine your efforts with HUD and other agencies. But knowing you are there will help me sleep better tonight. So I thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. LONG. Thank you.

Mrs. LOWEY. So first question: Congress authorized the alternative procedures pilot program as part of the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act to test a more efficient approach to awarding public assistance grants. So I would like to know from you how has the alternative procedures program worked with regard to Superstorm Sandy recovery efforts? Do you anticipate that Puerto Rico will choose this approach? And if so, do you anticipate any changes in how the program will work for Puerto Rico?

Mr. LONG. Ma'am, that is an excellent question. Thank you. And what I believe you are referring to is Section 428 of the Stafford Act. For large-scale events, it makes sense to go the 428 route. Now, a governor has to basically elect to go that route. Governor Rossello has proactively done so for Puerto Rico, and the reason that it is an advantage for us is—just merely going back to the roadway system.

If there are thousands of problems within the roadway system, which there are in Puerto Rico, instead of having to generate thousands of project worksheets to fix those problems, and those project worksheets can be reversioned for many years, and there seems to

be no end, the 428 program, as the governor so proactively agreed to, forces us to be outcome-based, and we can write one project worksheet for the entire roadway grid.

Now, where we have got to do a better job in helping the city of New York or other communities is they obviously have some concerns of when we do the cost estimate up front, at the beginning of the 428 program, did we accurately estimate how much it was going to cost. And that alone sometimes is frightening for a community, and I understand it, to make sure that they have hit the nail on the head. But as far as the efficiency goes, the 428 program truly is, in my opinion, the way that we need to go forward and continue to improve it.

Mrs. LOWEY. So following up on that, what is the process for how FEMA and Puerto Rico find agreement on the cost estimates for the hurricane damage? I know you are in the process of evaluating this. How long will that process take? Because I am hoping that the current supplemental, which is inadequate, can reflect some of your recommendation.

I don't want to put you on the spot, but I think it is important that we have a good idea, an accurate idea.

Mr. LONG. Sure. And you know what? This process never moves as quickly as citizens want it to move, because we have to be very careful with not only the inspections that are required, the technical expertise. For example, I don't know much about rebuilding a roadway system. I rely on U.S. DOT Puerto Rican transportation authorities and other agencies about what needs to work and what doesn't. So it is a comprehensive process that can't be done in a vacuum that requires many, many members to come in to tackle the situation and produce an accurate estimate.

If you would like the details, I would be happy to provide you several examples that we are already going through in Puerto Rico to make sure that we try to nail this up front.

Mrs. LOWEY. So following up, I would like to really better understand how the alternative procedures approach can potentially help Puerto Rico with its resiliency efforts. How will Puerto Rico use other Federal agencies to supplement what it receives through FEMA for improved infrastructure and facilities that can better withstand extreme weather events?

Mr. LONG. Right. So the 428 pilot program does allow for some improvements to become more resilient, not just putting back things to predisaster condition only to have them knocked out again. We can provide you some details on that as well. But it also is more incentive-based. If they come in underneath the actual estimate, once the project is complete under the estimate, there are incentives for them to do so when it comes to retaining some of that funding.

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Chairman, did I use up all my time already?

Mr. CARTER. We will give you little bit more time, but you are already past right now.

Mrs. LOWEY. Well, I will hold the rest of my questions.

Mr. CARTER. All right.

Mrs. LOWEY. Thank you very much.

Mr. CARTER. We will get Mr. Culberson here in a minute, and it is really going to be hard to hold him to that.

Mrs. LOWEY. Thank you. Then maybe I will take back a couple of minutes from you.

Thank you.

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Culberson.

Mr. CULBERSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have to say, Administrator Brock, your testimony is truly one of the most encouraging, and really it is marvelous to hear your commitment to help the people of the United States but also your very clear understanding of the genius of the United States, that our greatest strength as a Nation is relying on the good hearts and the good sense and those great core values that every American holds in their hearts to look after each other. Because you are right, the very best first responders are Americans themselves looking after their families and their neighbors and their friends and the local communities.

And I am just thrilled to hear what you said. Frankly, I want to make sure I get a picture with you, and we are going to put your testimony out on my Web site and get it out to all the people Houston and Texas. I mean, it is just superb. You are exactly right. And your willingness to be creative and innovative.

I would encourage you to ask your staff to go through all the statutes that you are responsible for, administering all the programs that you are responsible for, and ask them where do you have flexibility? Where has the Congress vested you with discretion and authority to make decisions on your own? For example, one thing that you have got authority to do, and you have done repeatedly, which we appreciate, is extending the deadlines because of the scale of the disaster in Texas. I know you all—it is just unheard of, what we have faced. And you have been very accommodating in extending those deadlines.

Another area you have got discretion in that I hope you will exercise is in Houston, all of the major synagogues in Houston flooded. Beth Yeshurun was completely destroyed. This was immediately prior to the high holy days. And the number of churches were flooded. But you have got the discretion to allow FEMA disaster assistance funding to go to reimburse or help defray the cost of rebuilding a religious institution.

I encourage you to go ahead and do so. That would help a great deal, because Beth Yeshurun was completely destroyed and is trying to raise the money to rebuild. Is that something you would be interested in and able to do?

Mr. LONG. Yes, that is a great question, because there is a little bit of a misunderstanding about the houses of worship. They are eligible for public assistance reimbursement if they provide a critical service to the community. And so that is what we are working through. We are under litigation right now, so I have to be careful about what I put forward. But, yeah I think that we have to relook at all 502(c)(3) compliant nonprofit organizations that are active in disaster as well and the eligibility requirements around that. And we are actively doing that.

Mr. CULBERSON. You are under an injunction to prevent you from doing so?

Mr. LONG. No, not right now. I said we are in the middle of litigation.

Mr. CULBERSON. Make them sue you, Judge, and shut them down. They need your help.

Another concern, if you take a look at the FEMA buyout program, for example. We have got neighborhoods in Houston where, as a result of previous floods, from the tax day flood to the Memorial Day flood, we had over the last couple of years where there were homes that were bought out by FEMA. And under FEMA rules, the land cannot be developed even if the—either the local community or the individual are the ones to buy the land, is willing to mitigate it. I hope you will look at that. I think you have got discretion in that area so that you could allow a local entity, for example, to go back in and buy these lots that are in the middle of very nice neighborhoods. You have all these great homes.

And then buying a vacant lot that is deeded to the county that has got weeds to 3 to 4 feet high, why not let someone go in there and develop that property and build it as long as they mitigate it to protect against, for example, a minimum 100-year flood or even higher. I think you have got the authority to do that.

Mr. LONG. Let me get back to you on that one, and I would be happy to look into that as well.

Mr. CULBERSON. You also are only able to elevate a home if you elevate an existing structure. Why not let the owner of the property elevate a home, tear down the old one and build a brand-new one? That would be a lot cheaper and a lot less money to the taxpayers as well.

You have got a whole variety of, I think, flexibility in your authority in things that you could do that would be a tremendous help, that I would certainly—I know this committee would like to help you with. You will find no better friend when it comes to helping you be innovative and creative and thinking outside the box than Judge John Carter, the chairman of this subcommittee. He's been terrific in helping on this. We deeply appreciate it in Houston. We really do.

And also on the premitigation money under section 404, that money could also be used to help mitigate or protect an area from future flooding, for example, correct?

Mr. LONG. Yes. Absolutely.

Mr. CULBERSON. And you are exactly right. Get the money out front by pushing it out front to a community and ensuring that it is available to help protect against the next flood to at least a 100-year event would be a tremendous help in protecting the Southeast Texas where 80 percent of the Nation's petrochemical refining capacity is, 70 percent of the Nation's aviation fuel moves through Port Neches, the Port of Houston, are extremely important. So I look forward to working with you on that.

And I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the good work that you have done in making sure this good man right here is able to implement all those out-of-box thinking ideas that you learned, I understand in the state of Alabama.

Mr. LONG. Sure.

Mr. CULBERSON. Thank you very much.

Mr. LONG. Mr. Chairman, may I have a moment to comment, or two, to comment on it?

Mr. CARTER. Yes. Absolutely.

Mr. LONG. So when you opened up, Congressman about your statement, and we are talking about being innovative and what my authorities are and what they aren't, one of the things that we get beat up on in the media, we get beat up by Congress, and we get beat up by elected officials all over is inspections, like when it comes to housing. You are too slow. You don't have enough inspectors.

The magnitude of the inspections that are needed from the California wildfire to the Virgin Islands is unprecedented. We have had over 6,000 inspectors that we have gotten our hands on to be able to put out in the field. But after that, you start to run out of resources. And so when you run into that problem, it is twofold. And this is an example of fragmented recovery. How do we reduce the need for a physical inspector to be in the field without looking at technology, satellite imagery, flood maps, and saying, "You know what, the house is flooded." Do we really need to send an inspector out there just to verify it? And it takes more time.

The other thing with the inspection process is we have a staff member at FEMA. Her name is Henrietta Alleman. She is a native of Louisiana. And not only does she work for FEMA around-the-clock. But her house was flooded. And when I was asking for ideas, she said, "Listen, you know what killed me is the number of inspections the Federal Government requires for me to get the assistance that I needed to fix my house." The flood program requires an inspection. HUD requires an inspection. Individual assistance inspections. Private insurance inspections. How do we get it down to one inspection that covers the multitude of everything that may be needed in the disaster recovery.

Now, the question for me, Congressman, is what is in my authority to change that versus where I am going to have to come back to say, please, Congress consider this.

Mr. CULBERSON. My brother, who is recovering from Stage 4 throat cancer, is living in his driveway in a trailer, and has been with his entire house destroyed 6 to 7 feet of water for 12 days, as are all of his neighbors. So God bless you. Thank you. You are exactly on target. And we are looking forward to helping you.

Mr. LONG. Thank you. Thank you.

Mr. CARTER. Very good.

Mr. Cuellar.

Mr. CUELLAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I passed some legislation, but I don't think FEMA has followed-up on this. Redundancy, elimination, enhanced performance—all those grants on—I am very happy that you are talking about some of the things that we need to address. I would like to talk to you later about this legislation that is on the books.

Let me go over a couple of questions that we confer with Governor Abbott's office. As you know, there are some issues that we have down there in Texas. And folks over here, there is—I think there was four appropriators from Texas that we have been working on this issues.

The first one, Mr. Long, how long is this disaster relief funding—how can this disaster relief funding be used? Because I know generally what we are talking about, but we want to make sure that that information is connected with the State and the locals.

Mr. LONG. Yes. So when it comes to just in general—and we can provide you details. But the two major programs are individual assistance and public assistance. And that is what we typically pay for. And when it comes to public assistance, there is multiple categories. There is emergency work, and then there is permanent work. So the emergency work, for example, goes to offset the cost of response. The response, it also offsets the cost of debris removal.

But then as you get into the permanent work of fixing infrastructure, public facilities funding out of the DRF can go to not only fund that, but then, on the individual assistance side, it is other needs. It could be anything from dental needs as a result of someone who has had problems from the flood, from that standpoint, to rental assistance to direct critical needs assistance, \$500 to help you buy groceries all the way to the housing mission that is there.

So it is a wide array, and that is just a very small sample what—

Mr. CUELLAR. And what do you think the goal of the disaster relief funding should be? Because as you know, in Texas, when we presented our thing to the White House, there seems to be a disconnect from the way we look at the goal of disaster relief funding.

Mr. LONG. So, in my opinion—well, that is a tough question too, in my opinion, saving lives in the response to kick-starting the recovery. The other thing that the DRF—

Mr. CUELLAR. And as you know—I am sorry to interrupt. Texas will say, well, how do we prevent some of those issues in the future? And that is where we are having a little disagreement.

Mr. LONG. Out of the DRF, the postdisaster funding that we are talking about, Section 404, a certain percentage of funding that we obligate becomes available for mitigation projects, not only through 404 but then also section 406. There is opportunities to mitigate infrastructure, public assistance damaged infrastructure. So they can actually utilize funding. Access becomes available to that funding after the disaster to do mitigation.

Now, what I would propose is is that you leave the 406 mitigation funding there to fix the infrastructure that is damaged. If it was damaged, let's rebuild it to a higher standard with that funding. The 404 money needs to go up front, because we require a local community or State community to design a mitigation plan. OK? But they don't have access to the funding they need to necessarily implement it.

Now, it is not FEMA's responsibility to create resiliency. I ultimately believe that resiliency lies in the hands of local elected officials through building codes and proper land use planning. FEMA's assistance just supplements this capability. But if we move the 404 money to the front end, it does a couple of things. It reduces the complexity of recovery and the problems in increasing how long recovery takes, but it allows communities to properly plan and execute their mitigation plans up front before disasters strike.

Mr. CUELLAR. Well, I would ask you to continue working with our governor's office on this issue, because I think—my two other colleagues here from Texas, we have been having different discussions as there is a little difference of opinion from the State of Texas and up here, which is, basically I guess the last question tied in—

I think you answered already—is this disaster relief designed or intended to support long-term recovery to make communities whole, which is—do you just fix that issue or can you use some of those resources for preventing some of those issues in the future, because otherwise we will be back again.

Mr. LONG. Well, here again, I will never make a community whole. And I don't believe that FEMA has the authority to make a community whole nor is it really my responsibility to make them whole. And here is the thing. Let's just say you have had a tornado go through a small Texas community that wipes out a majority of its infrastructure. FEMA is not trained nor should we be responsible in how to tell that community how to generate sales tax revenue after you have lost a large portion of your infrastructure. We are not good at that. We are good at debris removal, saving lives, coordinating response to do those missions. When it comes to long-term economic viability after going through a disaster, I am not so sure that that is FEMA's goal or mission. That might need to be the expertise of other portions of that whole community that I am talking about.

Mr. CUELLAR. I would ask you, on behalf of the folks here, to continue talking to our governor's office, because some of us are put in this type situation. I am not going to go in a second line of questions, so I am just going to ask this last one. Texas has \$10 billion in a rainy day fund, which I am very familiar, because we were in the State legislature when we created that. It rained in Texas.

Mr. LONG. Sure.

Mr. CUELLAR. So I think Texas should use—and I have said this publicly—I assume we all have—whenever you have conversations, make sure that we talk to Texas to make sure they do their fair share also. It just can't come in just from the Federal Government, because people have a tendency of attacking the Federal Government. But when they need cash the Federal Government is their best friend. So I just want to make sure that everybody has skin in the game. So I would ask you, when you have conversations with the governor's office, you go over that.

Mr. LONG. Absolutely. Mr. Chairman, may I take a minute to respond to that?

Mr. CARTER. You may.

Mr. LONG. Let me be clear about the State of Texas. Regardless of the issues that may take place inside Texas from disagreements on your view or the governor's view, or whatever, Texas—

Mr. CUELLAR. Oh, we are pretty much on the same view.

Mr. LONG. No. But what I am saying is is that Texas is a model, and here is why, because they are owning their disaster recovery. They are owning the recovery housing mission, and they are asking FEMA to support. We have got to get all 50 States to start owning the recovery process. I don't know how to fix your State better than you do. OK? And my role should be one of a counselor of saying, here is what you are entitled to and here is what you are going to need to achieve those goals.

When it comes to a rainy day fund, I think that Congress should take a look at what States don't have them, period. So that when a Federal disaster declaration is not coming forward, then what is the obligation of a State to step up and serve their own citizens?

And are these rainy day funds actually designed to handle individual assistance and public assistance at a smaller scale until Federal disaster assistance could be turned on at some point?

So it is one thing to have a rainy day fund. It is another way of understanding how it is set up. And I think if we make a whole community improvement, then all these States need to have rainy day funds that are designed similar to the assistance that we put forward. But I am just one opinion.

Mr. CUELLAR. Well, we appreciate it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CARTER. Doctor Harris.

Mr. HARRIS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Long, for coming before the committee. And I too share enthusiasm over the direction it seems FEMA has taken under your guidance. I will be brief, I think.

It looks like the lesson from Puerto Rico is that—we kind of pulled the bandage off. What we kind of discovered is that the infrastructure has been neglected probably far longer and to a far greater extent than we even managed when we passed the PROMESA Act. And I guess we have to come to the policy decision of exactly how much are we going to ask the rest of the country to pay for neglected infrastructure that I think is far greater than anything we see in the 50 States. But that is an issue that we will grapple with as part of the request.

But the two issues I have are how wisely and efficiently we spend money on emergencies. The New York Times wrote a story about by linemen who are fixing the grid there are getting paid \$63 an hour, but the contractor who hires them getting reimbursed \$319 from a contract that, ultimately, we are going to pay for. I assume; is that right? Was that a contract that ultimately FEMA was going to kind of pay for?

Mr. LONG. The power grid rebuild is being handled by the Army Corps of Engineers. They have two prime contractors that are managing the rebuild, as I understand it. And those prime contractors are bringing subconsultants underneath them. So it will be ultimately a good question for them.

Mr. HARRIS. OK. So I guess it is part of the entire \$44 billion package, but not your part.

Let me ask a very specific question that interestingly enough they couldn't answer at a agricultural subcommittee hearing on this disaster aid yesterday.

When you pay for building projects to repair infrastructure, Davis-Bacon applies? Davis-Bacon rules?

Mr. LONG. I am assuming so. Yes. Absolutely.

Mr. HARRIS. Do you think you could be more efficient with our taxpayer dollars if we carve out emergency spending and say, You know what. We can actually get far more infrastructure rebuild, and we can get far more disaster mitigation in the future if we actually didn't have to adhere to Davis-Bacon rules?

Mr. LONG. I don't know the answer to that question. I would be happy to come back with an opinion. I would be happy to work with OMB and the administration on that as well.

Mr. HARRIS. Do you know how many States don't, in fact, have prevailing wage?

Mr. LONG. I do not.

Mr. HARRIS. So we are asking—oh, I know there are many States. I know there are many States that don't. So we are asking citizens from around the country to pay for disaster mitigation, infrastructure rebuilding. Don't get me wrong. We need to do these projects. But if a project is done in their State by a private entity, they don't have to pay this premium, that Davis-Bacon makes these contractors—or makes these contracts cost through Davis-Bacon. But we are going to ask them to pay for repairs in other—for instance, in a State like Texas, if a private entity does—repairs their building, they are not subject to Davis-Bacon. But if FEMA comes in and pays for it—so if I get your answer right, if FEMA comes in to rebuild that same building, that same infrastructure, they have to ascribe to Davis-Bacon rules; is that correct?

Mr. LONG. As I understand it, yes. But I can get back to you.

Mr. HARRIS. I would appreciate that very much.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. CARTER. I am sorry. Mr. Price, you are looking at me, but I am not paying attention.

Mr. PRICE. All right. Thank you.

Welcome, Mr. Administrator. I am proud to note that you are born and reared in North Carolina and have done very well, including this latest assignment. And we congratulate you on your appointment and on the way you are handling a very, very full plate. Most notably, three hurricanes and disastrous wildfires in your early months of service.

Let me ask you about the White House's approach to this, the disaster supplemental request, which included the following sentence: The administration believes it is prudent to offset new spending. In order to offset increases to the new emergency spending we are requesting, the Congress should also consider designating offsets for the base appropriations as an emergency.

Director Mulvaney then provided a supposedly helpful venue of inventory of options for cuts that totaled \$59 billion, a menu of money of poison pills, you might say. Things like Pell grants, animal and plant health inspection, highway construction. Quite a list. Supposedly helpful as we try to meet this urgent request. Ironically, this request came one day after House Republicans, with the backing of the President, passed a package where the tax cuts exceeded the offsets by \$1.5 trillion, which clearly would balloon our national debt. So I am not going to ask you to comment on OMB's approach to this. But I do want to confirm with you that every dollar of the \$23.5 billion in Federal funding for the Disaster Relief Fund does qualify under the law as emergency spending and thus requires no offset. I am not asking what the administration has proposed. I am simply asking the simple question does this request qualify as emergency spending?

Mr. LONG. To my knowledge, I would say yes.

Mr. PRICE. The answer is yes. All right.

Let me move on to how we might approach the housing needs, which you have stressed, others have stressed. We do have a vehicle for housing support which has been utilized in other situations, and that would be the Disaster Housing Assistance Program, which FEMA and HUD enter into these agreements. They enter into after

disasters. They did after Hurricane Katrina. We have seen a number of these agreements. As I understand it, there has not been such an agreement entered into, though, with respect to the current disasters.

What could you tell us about that? Would a DHAP program be helpful in this situation? Is it appropriate in this situation? Have you discussed the possibility of such an approach with Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, the effected jurisdictions.

Mr. LONG. Sure. Absolutely.

So, here again, each one of the housing missions is incredibly unique. A one-size-fits-all solution is not going to work. What works for Texas is not going to work for California. It is not going to work for Puerto Rico. We are in daily conversations with HUD.

For example, in Puerto Rico, and we are having discussions about where FEMA housing assistance begins and ends versus where HUD picks up. And so that discussion was occurring ongoing as of yesterday as well, and will continue. And I will be meeting with HUD as I go back to Puerto Rico on Sunday and Monday of next week.

When it comes to housing, I think there is a lot of room for improvement when it comes to who is totally responsible for disaster housing and how we implement this down. Now, I will say this.

You want to talk about cost the estimates are all over the place, but we have run some analysis where just to bring one manufactured home into a community costs the taxpayer \$202,000, cradle to grave. Think about it. I have to buy it. I have to haul it. I have to install it. I have to make sure that it is secure. I have to watch over it for 18 months, sometimes maybe more. Then I have to dispose of it. So how do we get more—how do we do things better.

Manufactured housing is always going to have to be an option on the table, because in some areas, particularly rural areas, there are no other options, such as a multitude of hotels. But what we did in Texas, which I would ask you guys to take a look at, was something truly innovative.

Instead of bringing in a manufactured home, if your house was less than 50 percent damaged but yet you sustained more than \$17,000 worth of damage, then we are trying to change the world by allowing—granting the money down through the general land office to the local governments and Council of Governments to do \$60,000 worth of permanent construction to the household. \$60,000 worth to the household to get people back in their homes. It is not going to move—it moves at a swift glacial pace if you have lost your house.

But to the taxpaying public, we have got to find better solutions for housing across the board. Bringing in travel trailers, whether it is FEMA assistance or DHAP programs, we got a lot of work—you know, a lot of work. It is not a fun program to put forward. It is truly necessary, but there is a lot of money that can be saved and a lot more efficiencies that could be put in place.

Mr. PRICE. Well, I appreciate your perspective on that. The DHAP program in particular has been utilized, however. It has utilized commonly. And it is not being utilized at this moment, so you understand where I am coming from as to whether this is a vehicle or a tool that, perhaps, we should consider in this instance.

Mr. LONG. Sure. Thank you.

Mr. PRICE. So if you will get back to me.

Mr. LONG. We will get back to you, sir.

Mr. PRICE. I appreciate that.

Mr. CULBERSON [presiding]. Thank you, Dr. Price. And I appreciate you mentioning that, Director Long, because that is important, to give people that flexibility to push the money out there. We have got tens of thousands of Houstonians living on the second floor of their home with all the sheetrock torn out.

I want to make sure they are eligible for funding. They have been displaced. They just don't have anywhere else to go. And, by the way, my brother bought that trailer. He put it in the driveway. He always wanted one, but—he wanted an RV—but not this way.

Mr. LONG. Right.

Mr. CULBERSON. Dan, thank you. Mr. Newhouse, thank you.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Thank you, Acting Chairman Culberson, Chairman Carter, Ranking Member Roybal-Allard, thanks for having this hearing.

Welcome, Mr. Administrator. I appreciate your being with us today reporting on Puerto Rico. I want to join my colleagues in expressing the—I certainly love to hear some of the things that you said. You didn't come to preserve the status quo, and you would like to work on change. And your words about resiliency are very good.

In the spirit of improvement, we like to hear those kinds of things, and we look forward to working with you on all of that. So I am glad to hear that there is progress being made in Puerto Rico. I have been on a couple hearings learning about some of what is happening. Lots of work yet to do, but we are making some good progress.

I wanted to focus—as you continue your work there, I want to make sure that we are focusing on rural areas just as much as urban areas. And I will use some of my own experience as an example. I am from the State of Washington, and you may or may not know, but you will in the next few years, I am sure, unfortunately, we have had historic wildfires in our State as well as the rest of the West. We have received major disaster declarations, certainly. In my State, over the last a couple of years, we burned cumulatively, I think, over 2 million acres. Something like 400 homes have been consumed. FEMA denied any individual assistance for these disasters.

And so what we have found in States like mine where we have large population centers in large rural areas, that, for some reason, the current formula as it comes to determining disaster aid leaves us out.

And so the words concentration come up in conversations with officials from FEMA. And so I guess my question relates to looking at how these determinations are made, any formula changes that FEMA may be considering, how we can work with you to consider some of these changes to make them more workable, more clearly define those formulas, so then, at least in my opinion, that urban and rural are treated equitably.

Mr. LONG. Sure. Congressman, you raise a very sensitive issue that I am very familiar with. Having been the State director of Ala-

bama's emergency management agency, the nature of many of those counties is very rural. And whether it is a wildfire or a tornado, in some cases, the most rural communities can truly sustain a lot of damage that doesn't necessarily meet the public assistance numeric indicators, and there are tremendous amounts of individual assistance needs that are there, but because the rural nature versus the State numeric indicators that are there, they are, in some cases, somewhat penalized.

Now, we have to find a balance, and I would be happy to work with you. The Sandy Recovery Improvement Act reset the thresholds or the considerations for individual assistance. Is it perfect? That is up for debate and discussion.

But I do have a question. When it comes to the whole community and the responsibilities of all levels of government, if Federal disaster assistance is not coming, what is the State's rainy day fund designed to do to help those rural communities as well? Because we see this—a majority of the disasters and emergencies that occur nationwide, FEMA is not involved in. I mean, there are hundreds of disasters that FEMA doesn't come to assist us in. And what I am afraid of is, it does that increase what is on my plate from the standpoint of trying to work a much smaller level of disaster approval when it comes to individual assistance or public assistance. And it puts us in a tough spot.

Look, I didn't get into emergency management not to help people. I have the spirit to want to help people. That is why I am where I am. But at some point, we have to figure out what the true capability of each State and local government should be to work with their own citizens.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. I would not disagree with that. In fact, I would agree that it should be a concerted effort to work together, all agencies.

Mr. LONG. Sure.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Local, State, and Federal. And but it seems to me we are not quite to the place where we need to be on all of those levels.

Mr. LONG. Sure, sure.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. But I appreciate that and understand the sensitivity or the wisdom it is going to take to find that balance.

Mr. LONG. Sure.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. And I look forward to working with you on that.

Mr. LONG. And I look forward to working with you, sir.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Good.

Mr. LONG. Absolutely.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Thank you. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. CARTER. Thank you.

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER.

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Administrator Long, this is your day. You have received compliments from both sides of the aisle, and I think they are well deserved. I think, unfortunately, sometimes in the government, whether Federal, State and local, we have too many political appointments who don't have expertise or have the ability to manage. And looking at your resume, other than the fact you didn't come from Maryland—you came from North Carolina, and

you worked in Alabama—that is OK. I like my southerners. But I appreciate your straightforward, your ability to look at problems and to solve them. And I think that is an important issue.

I was a former county executive, Baltimore County, close to 800,000 people, a lot of waterfront in that area. And during my tenure, we had a lot of issues in waterfront properties. And I agree with you on the issue that local government has to change their zoning laws and their ability to rebuild so that they can be protected. And I think that happened in Florida after some of the storms, that they withstood a lot of these storms because you can't rebuild and have it come over and over. So I really think that is important, and I agree with you focusing on that issue. It is extremely important.

What I want to get into—because a lot of times, they are not protected. I know the chairman likes them a lot. But I want to get into the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard—this is probably going to be more of a statement, but I do want to ask you a question.

The Coast Guard for their tremendous hurricane response, they rescued more than 11,500 Americans in the last 3 months. Per the Commandant, the branch is facing a \$914 million shortfall to attend to a backlog of ship and aircraft maintenance and repairs for hangars and other facilities damaged by storms. With that being said, the request in front of us turns its back on the Coasties, only offering \$500 million, less than the admiral's request.

The Coast Guard is always doing more with less. I didn't realize that until I came to Congress, that they were the stepchild, probably of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines. And the good news, I think they are in Homeland Security, where they need to be, and now they are getting acknowledged for what they do. They consistently get the job done and a lot of times taken for granted, and for this reason, we rarely increase their funding.

It is something that the better they do, and they do it with less, and then what is their reward? They keep getting less, less, less. Sooner or later, that is going to backfire.

Now, the President has requested that this cut be done. I know that you don't have authority there, but I understand that it comes through you, it comes through, probably OMB, to you, and then you delegate that or you pay that out. And if we don't, if we don't take care of the Coast Guard, they are not going to be able to produce like they have. What can you do, if anything, recommendation, to make sure that they get the request, close to the request that they asked for?

The other thing, and the elephant in the room every time, is sequestration. And it is up to Republicans and Democrats in a bipartisan way to do away with this terrible law that makes us weaker militarily, domestically, in whatever we do. And I want to raise that just as an issue. You don't have to answer that, but I do want to get on how we can do more and what your recommendation would be—I realize you don't have the authority; you are more of a pass-through that gives it to the Coast Guard—to deal with issue because you need them and we need them.

Mr. LONG. Yeah. So, by and large, we always mission-assign for large events the U.S. Coast Guard to be able to do the life-saving

mission. And they provide tremendous capabilities. I have the deepest respect for the members of the Coast Guard.

And in regard to your specific question about—I am Coast Guard advocate. Based on what I have seen I would be happy to go back to the Department of Homeland Security and the administration to address the issues or understand them, but I don't want to speak for the Commandant and the Coast Guard directly here, if that is OK.

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Yes, but isn't it my understanding, it comes——

Mr. LONG. We mission-assign them, and through the Disaster Relief Fund, we can provide reimbursement for the usage of their equipment and the disaster costs. As far as fixing equipment, I don't believe we have the authority to do that.

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. OK. I yield back.

Mr. CARTER. Thank you.

I believe it is back to me. And we have had a series of really good questions on both sides, and I am very appreciative of the questions.

My colleague Ken Calvert, a current cardinal and a friend of all of us on this committee, wanted me to ask this question: California requests an increase to the 75/25 cost share for debris removal related to the fires in Santa Rosa. The State requested the waiver on October 8. It has not received a response.

Could you tell us what the status of this request is, and do you foresee any issue with this request from being approved?

Mr. LONG. I will have to come back to you on the exact status of where it is in the queue. It is probably under consideration right now. So I would be happy to come back and work with you, sir, on that.

Mr. CARTER. You know that they do have the ability to have a waiver of up to 90 percent.

Mr. LONG. I do, yes, sir.

Mr. CARTER. I would like to speak to you more generally about the process for determining the Federal cost share for FEMA public assistance. I understand this is largely formula-driven but that FEMA also makes assessments on a disaster-by-disaster basis to determine when it is appropriate and necessary to increase the Federal cost share of a disaster.

How does FEMA work with the affected areas to ensure that cost share are determined fairly and accurately, and what other factors does FEMA consider outside of the per capita cost of the disaster?

Mr. LONG. Mr. Chairman, this is another area where Congress needs to look at the whole concept of the numeric indicators that we use in general.

So typically what we look at is, it is a formula of, I think it is at \$1.43 per person based on the State population, which determines whether or not we believe Federal disaster assistance should be made available or public assistance should be made available to a State after a disaster, OK, on uninsured losses, right.

For 10 years, that numeric indicator did not change according to inflation. And, honestly, if it had, that numeric indicator today would be \$2.27 per person, which would shock the system and be

a tremendous amount of money that State and local governments would be responsible for.

I often question whether or not the numeric indicator actually measures a State and local's capability to handle disasters in its entirety, but that is just the way business has been done since 1986. It is time to take a look at that entire formula and how we determine assistance.

Now, when it comes from being 75/25 to 90/10 or even up to 100 percent, PKEMRA laid out a formula, a numeric indicator, PKEMRA laid out a formula that we typically follow to go to 90/10 percent cost share. And so that is what we are following currently.

Mr. CARTER. I want to shift gears to something you and I talked about on the phone.

Mr. LONG. OK.

Mr. CARTER. The State of Texas is taking the lead in the housing mission for survivors of Hurricane Harvey, which as I understand, is the first time a State has assumed this role. While I am confident that Texas is well equipped to handle such a task, implementing a new process while responding to a disaster of this magnitude inevitably comes with problems.

Can you tell me about how this process has been working? Have you seen any efficiencies with the State in the lead role? How is FEMA making sure the needs of disaster survivors are addressed and that no request slips through the cracks under this new process?

Mr. LONG. First of all, Governor Abbott made a very bold and courageous decision to lead it. And not only lead it but to be innovative in the way that we tried to address the housing issues.

For example, hundreds of thousands of homes have been impacted. There aren't enough trailers and, in some cases hotels, to be able to service this one disaster, much less Irma and everything else. So what is being done right now is that FEMA is basically traditionally running the housing mission, as we normally would, on behalf of the State, but we are in the transition point of making sure that the General Land Office has its feet underneath them to be able to administer the grant dollars down, to run all aspects of the housing program.

I am not going to allow the State of Texas to fail. Will it move quickly? Housing never does because of the sheer complexities that we often run into when it comes to the different types of damages that people have seen, whether they, their house is totally destroyed or can be repaired or what it requires. But we are working every day. I was in Texas 2 weeks ago, right before the Thanksgiving holiday making sure we met with George P. Bush, as well as Governor Abbott, on a transition and making sure that this becomes a successful program and that, because they were willing to bite off this, that we are going to be with them every step of the way. We are not going to hand this off and then back out. I am not going to allow my staff to do that. So we will be with them through the completion of this housing mission.

Mr. CARTER. Well, I have a lot of confidence in the land office, and I think they will do you a really good job, and I am glad you all are partnering up on this. I think any time you try a new con-

cept, I think it is thinking outside the box, which government should do more of and doesn't do very well. So I congratulate you on doing that.

The next question is one that I know that Farenthold has been talking to Ms. Granger about, so I am asking this on behalf of them.

I have heard of delays and other issues in some of the smaller communities, the communities with fewer resources along the coastline. What is FEMA doing to ensure these communities get the assistance they need to successfully access Federal funding available to them? And this is really the lower coast down towards Corpus Christi, Rockport, Port Aransas, all that devastated area.

Mr. LONG. So I am not sure of the exact issues that he is referring to, but I do know that my staff is on the ground, and I do know that the manufactured housing units that have been requested, you know, they are mobilizing to the coast, and many of them are in place.

Do we have a long way to go? Of course, we do. But there is movement down there. Here again, we are trying to move as fast as we can based on the material and the personnel that we have, and I would be happy to check back in and directly contact the Congressman as a result of this hearing. I will be happy to hear him out.

Mr. CARTER. OK. I will tell him that. Thank you. Ms. Roybal-Allard.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. I want to go back to one of my original questions, and that had to do with the proposal to give you discretion to waive the predisaster condition limitation on public assistance grants. You answered the part with regards to Puerto Rico, but I also would like to know if you considered extending that authority to the U.S. Virgin Islands, and if not, why not?

Mr. LONG. I will have to get back to you on that one as well. The deferred maintenance issues and just the antiquated infrastructure of Puerto Rico is vastly different than even in the Virgin Islands, but I will definitely go back and take a look. I don't know the answer to that question right now.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. OK. Thank you.

I understand that General Buchanan and a large part of the military presence have left the island. And prior to this, General Buchanan was charged with coordination with Federal agencies and the Puerto Rican government. Now, my understanding is that FEMA has that role.

I have three parts to my question. Has this transition gone smoothly, and is coordination, how is it going generally? And, also, will FEMA be in charge of coordinating the long-term recovery effort, and if so, does FEMA have the resources in terms of staffing to manage a project of this size while maintaining the operational ability to respond to new disasters?

Mr. LONG. Sure. So the incident command structure in Puerto Rico has always been we have had a Federal coordinating officer, a FEMA Federal coordinating officer, who is the lead authority in charge. Technically, a Federal coordinating officer is an arm of the President of the United States. That person is Mike Byrne.

General Buchanan technically would report to the Federal coordinating officer since inception of him being in Puerto Rico. And so, obviously, as we transition out of response to more recovery, we start to demobilize some of the staff but also increase staffing with the expertise to run into the long-term recovery. Releasing General Buchanan is not something that we do haphazardly. It was a very methodical decision to demobilize him, but it should have been a seamless transition. And as I am aware, it was—or is.

In regards to the long-term disaster recovery, what we try to follow is what is called the National Disaster Recovery Framework. And so what it does, it points out six different recovery support functions. It could be economic viability to housing. And so the goal of that is, is to—and we have already been working with our Federal Government agency partners to make sure that if they are the primary agency in charge of a specific recovery support function, that they are sending staff to Puerto Rico that have the authority to make decisions there on the ground rather than here in Washington, DC, because I believe that all incident command decisions should be made closest to the event rather than all the way back up here. And that is the framework that we are following, and that is how we are staffing the long-term recovery going forward.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. OK. The supplemental request from the administration includes request language that would require Puerto Rico to submit a recovery plan to the President and to Congress. Now, this plan would be developed in consultation with FEMA, the Department of Treasury, and other Federal agencies identified in the National Disaster Recovery Framework. It is important that Puerto Rico has ownership of the plan, but they are going to need technical assistance. So in what ways will FEMA and the other Federal partners help support the creation of such a plan, and can you explain how this process will work and the importance of the National Disaster Recovery Framework.

Mr. LONG. Right. So here, again, we will use the framework, and if I remember the language correctly in the supplemental, it doesn't just say a Puerto Rico recovery plan; it is a plan that is infused with FEMA and our additional stakeholders, as I recall.

So we recognize that this is the first time that Puerto Rico has run through a long-term recovery like this. And so we do not ever want to set up Governor Rossello for failure to say, "Write your plan, execute it," and we back out. We will be there for many years to come executing this disaster recovery framework. And the Governor knows that. I will be seeing him next week. I talked to him earlier this week, but I will be seeing him next week to make sure that I put boots on the ground on a regular basis to say where are we versus where we need to be, and what do you need?

But you are right in your statement. The thing that is right is the Governor is willing to step up and start owning the long-term recovery. And I think he is beginning to look at this as an opportunity to rebuild Puerto Rico in a more resilient fashion.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Thank you.

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Culberson?

Mr. CULBERSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Administrator Long, I just can't thank you enough for your innovative thinking and your willingness to trust the good hearts and

the good instincts of individual Americans, and, as you said, to put the command decisions for response to these disasters as close as possible to the disaster itself at the hands of State and local officials, and, more importantly, your willingness to put it in the hands of individual Americans because I can tell you there is some great opportunity there.

The Federal Disaster Mitigation Program, for example, today, is designed to obviously mitigate future risk of flooding and minimize the cost to the Federal Government. But to an individual homeowner, for example, and, again, one of the bedrocks of the American system is private property rights, because we know nobody is going to take better care of that property than the individual property owner. And I would encourage you—I would really like to work this through with you in more detail.

Let me bounce this off of you. I have met with a lot of constituents who have come up with a lot of really good ideas to improve the Federal program. And CDBG, Mr. Chairman, the HUD program, Lucille and David, comes at the tail end. That housing money comes way at the tail end of the process. And we are focusing, the money is upfront, and if we would, as you have said, push the money out early and get it in the hands of the individual homeowner right away, as quickly as possible, to mitigate the damage, to repair the damage to their own home, and to mitigate the flood risk for the future, I think the Federal Government would save a vast amount of money.

Because, for example, today, if a homeowner qualifies for FEMA disaster assistance, the only option available to them is essentially either to raze an existing structure or just participate in a buyout, and then the Federal Government owns the land. That is actually, in this case, I discovered, David, the deed is in the hands of the county, Harris County, which makes no sense because then you have literally got—I have got neighborhoods with beautiful homes all in a row, and then there is an empty vacant lot with weeds about 5 feet high, and the county owns the property. The homeowners association has to go in there and mow it. It is taken off of the tax rolls. So it is just a burden to everybody.

So what if you simply—we change the way this FEMA program works so that if Dr. Price's home flooded, that you would be able to apply, David, for assistance, and the money would go directly to you upfront, and you would have the option to either mitigate the property—because right now, you either have to sell it to the Federal Government or raze an existing structure. But why not limit the amount of money the Federal Government could give you, and you get the money upfront, you hire a contractor, decide to either tear down your existing home or build a new structure, but it has to be razed or mitigated so that you are ready for the next flood? Your property stays on the tax rolls. You are going to build a home that suits you and your family and suits the neighborhood. You are going to save the Federal taxpayers a ton of money, and it is not going to be taken off of the tax rolls of local government.

Again, simply by trusting Dr. Price's good heart and his good instinct to take care of his own property in his own neighborhood, you see that would, I think, if we created a program like that—

doesn't that fit with precisely what you are recommending, that we get the money out front?

Mr. LONG. I am all for innovation, and I think what we would be happy to do is work with you to discuss the pros and cons of the ideas that you are putting forward. And I am all for bettering any situation and doing more mitigation because I do believe that mitigation is the key to future resiliency. But we have also got to tackle some systemic problems and myths that we have in this country.

Insurance is the first line of defense. And I don't just say that to say it, but those who are insured recover quicker than those that don't when they are hit, right. In California, what was interesting is it is not just a flood insurance problem of having insurance or not, but it is allowing a homeowner to let their insurance lapse. And in some cases, what we saw is that the insurance lapsed: The house was paid off; the insurance lapsed. And you have got a huge portion of the homes that are impacted in California that are uninsured now. And that becomes, that becomes my problem to fix through individual assistance, and I can never make them whole.

We have got to go back, in this culture of preparedness concept that I am pushing, and teach people about insurance, not only of their dwelling, mitigation tactics, but it is not just mitigation tactics at the home. It is mitigation tactics that are low-to-no-cost tactics for schools, for businesses and homes, and then offering that money upfront. I am all up for offering money upfront.

Mr. CULBERSON. Right. Low to no cost.

Mr. LONG. It doesn't make sense not to have on—low-to-no-cost options that do the greatest good down the road.

Mr. CULBERSON. You are exactly right. And do it upfront.

Mr. LONG. Right.

Mr. CULBERSON. Low to no cost. And I want to particularly thank one of my constituents, Charles Goforth, who is the president of the Meyerland Homeowners Association, who spent a lot of time working on this. Meyerland is an area that is flooded repeatedly over the years. It is sort of a bowl in Houston. But they are devoted to the neighborhood. They are devoted to keeping a thriving, vibrant neighborhood. It is where a lot of the largest synagogues in the State of Texas are located. If you are Orthodox, for example, if you are Orthodox, you have got to live within walking distance of your synagogue because you can't drive a car on Saturday.

So these folks, I am telling you, there is no better—I want to thank Charles for these ideas because he is exactly right. If you qualify today for mitigation money from the Feds, there are only two options: buy out or raze the existing structure.

So let us change the system. I want to work with you, and you, Mr. Chairman, and this subcommittee, to find a way to get the money out front.

Mr. LONG. Sure.

Mr. CULBERSON. And in the hands of the homeowner, who is going to do the best job, the quickest, the fastest and the most effective, saving money for everybody in the process and getting that homeowner made whole in a way that suits them and their family much, much more quickly.

I think we are on the right path. And I thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Price.

Mr. PRICE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me turn to a troubling aspect of most disasters that we have had in recent years. And that is reports of individuals being increasingly vulnerable to sexual assaults during the chaos of the disaster and directly afterwards. And part of the problem seems to be overcrowded and understaffed shelters that put people at greater risk of domestic violence and sexual assault. It was reported that one third of the sexual assaults that occurred during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita took place at emergency shelters.

So I am wondering what account FEMA might have taken of this. It would be practical, for example, for FEMA shelters to have safety plans and processes in place to respond to sexual assaults, for individual shelters to have educational information available detailing emergency domestic violence and sexual assault services in the area. So I have a couple of questions.

One is, are you aware of whether this pattern has continued during this most recent, this most recent spate of disasters? Has there been the same kind of problem reported, sexual assaults occurring in this immediate post-disaster period? Does FEMA track such assaults? Is there anything being done to prevent this behavior from taking place in shelters?

Mr. LONG. Sure.

Mr. PRICE. And then, secondly, what about the preexisting domestic violence shelters that are damaged? As of October 1, we have reports that 23 domestic violence shelters have been significantly damaged; 19 have been moderately damaged. Of course, they need to be either repaired or rebuilt. After Hurricane Sandy, in 2012, Congress provided \$2 million specifically to repair domestic violence shelters postdisaster.

So I am wondering if you have any plans to help domestic violence shelters in particular and might we expect a specific proposal along these lines?

Mr. LONG. Sure. Congressman, so, first of all, anything we can do to provide a safe shelter environment from the whole community is in all of our best interests. Obviously I definitely would like to be a part of being able to do that. But I think it is important to point out that shelter operations, FEMA does not run shelter operations. We basically pay for these. A lot of the shelter mission is run at the local level in conjunction with the American Red Cross, and we would be happy to reach out to Gail McGovern at the Red Cross to understand what the trends are. I can't answer for the most recent events. I have not been made aware of disturbing trends of this taking place in shelters, but I would be obviously happy to look into it to see what changes we can effectively make on that.

And I want to make sure that I understand: You are referencing in the second part of your question, domestic violence shelter; is that what I understand?

Mr. PRICE. Yes.

Mr. LONG. OK. If they are a registered 501(c)(3) compliant non-profit organization that does that and they sustain damage and

they provide those critical facilities, they should be eligible under public assistance. If they are not, then that might be where the discrepancy is, if they are not registered, but we would be happy to look into that as well.

Mr. PRICE. Well, let's check on both things if you will.

Mr. LONG. Sure.

Mr. PRICE. On the last one first. There was a specific appropriation after Sandy. That is what caught my eye.

Mr. LONG. OK.

Mr. PRICE. So I am not sure why that was deemed necessary, but it certainly was helpful.

Mr. LONG. OK.

Mr. PRICE. And it may or may not be indicated in our present situation.

And then, as regards the reporting, we do have earlier reporting on Katrina and Rita, and the level of assaults that followed those disasters. And so somebody somewhere should be monitoring this, and I understand you have shared responsibility. But there, too, I would appreciate your getting back to the committee as to what kind of monitoring you or anybody else is doing and what the indications are as to the level of this problem with these current disasters.

Mr. LONG. OK. We would be happy to get back to you on that. And I can tell you with the oversight of the grant funding, regardless of what mission it serves particularly I am taking a very proactive stance in making sure that we are monitoring tax paying dollars very carefully.

For example, we have mobilized procurement disaster assistance teams to be embedded with grant recipients. I have also deployed the Office of Inspector General underneath the Homeland Security to be in the field with us to help us uncover any issues or mistakes we may be making upfront. We also provide quarterly reports and we have public assistance managers embedded with people who receive our funds.

So I am trying to put a multilayered approach down to make sure that we are expending funding according to rules and regulations and policies as much as I can. But I am always open to improvement. And here again, I believe that any of the money management that comes down from the Federal Government is the responsibility of not only FEMA but the whole community. And we have a lot of training to do and to also set the expectations at the State and local level or the subgrantee recipients, whether it is a nonprofit or a government entity.

Mr. PRICE. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CARTER. Thank you, Mr. Price.

We are not going to do another round, but I think Ms. Roybal-Allard has another question, and I am going to yield to her right now.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. One quick question with regard to California. On October 10, the President issued a major disaster declaration for areas of northern California that were ravaged by the wildfires, and this came on the heels of several fire management assistance declarations for California in the preceding days. The

supplemental request does not specifically address Western wildfires. So my question, is there sufficient funding in the Disaster Relief Fund to provide all the eligible aid to individuals and communities, and what is FEMA assuming for the overall cost of the fires in terms of the Disaster Relief Fund?

Mr. LONG. Sure. Excellent question. So, with California, as I said earlier, one of the most disturbing events I have ever seen and the sensitivities around that and the deaths that were there. It is something that we have to look into.

In regard to the cost and our appropriations and the ask if you look at some of the numbers, if I look through for Harvey—or excuse me, for Maria, we have obligated about \$7.2 billion. For Harvey, we have obligated about \$4.6 billion to this point. For the California wildfires, it is \$1.1 billion. It is something that we are taking into account for the normal disaster relief fund appropriation through the BCA and the formula that is set up.

If we can't get through, if we need additional funding, we obviously would come back for a supplemental after the fiscal year 2018 year or before, if needed. But right now, we think we can absorb the cost based on the trends that we are seeing of California in the appropriation, the normal appropriation route of the DRF.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. OK.

And, Mr. Chairman, if I may, I just want to say that I am equally encouraged and excited about your testimony and your response to the questions that this committee has had and really look forward to working with you and the committee to make FEMA more efficient and more effective in terms of our response to these disasters. So thank you for being here.

Mr. LONG. Thank you, madam.

Mr. CARTER. I am going to have one more kind of off-the-wall question I want to ask you or discuss with you. When this all happened and it was all over the newspapers that there was no power in Puerto Rico, I happen to be having a meeting in my office with people from the power business on a totally different matter.

Mr. LONG. OK.

Mr. CARTER. And so I asked him, I said: Hey, why don't you guys be good citizens like in Houston, pack up your gear and go over and fix that, at least to where they get some power.

And their response to me, which I think you have been saying indirectly, is it is the most antiquated system maybe in existence, definitely in North America.

Mr. LONG. The United States, yeah.

Mr. CARTER. And we don't even have parts to fix a lot of what they have got there. And the real world is, if we went over there to do it, we would have to rewire the whole island.

Mr. LONG. So I am sure that there are plenty of media interviews of me before Maria hit saying: Prepare for the power to be off for many months.

And we knew that before Maria hit. The Governor of Puerto Rico knew it. And it is unfortunate. It doesn't alleviate this pain and suffering. We are moving as fast as we can, but the problem that we have is, is that because it is an island, you can only shove so much food and water in. You are trying to fix emergency power issues with hospitals to sustain an entire hospital system that

nearly collapsed. And you have to focus on the priorities of life safety before you can start to rebuild a grid. You can only shove so much into an island at initial stages. And you have to remember, too, that the entire air traffic control system was wiped out.

So, right after the storm is over, you are having to carefully bring aircraft in on a manual basis. There is 30 minutes between flights to get them in because you don't want to wreck C-5 Galaxies and exacerbate the problem.

The other thing is that we quickly mission-assigned the Army Corps of Engineers. We recognized the problem. They are on the island doing the emergency power. Let us go ahead and mission-assign them. I worked with the Governor very proactively to say, "Let's go ahead and take the initial power grid rebuild in mind, go ahead and start doing what we can to get that back up," because we knew it was going to be a long time.

When it comes to traditional emergency management mutual aid, like what would work in Florida or what would work in Texas, first of all—and I don't mean to sound sarcastic—you can't drive trucks and mutual aid assistance in to Puerto Rico like we do in Florida or Texas. And in many cases, the private sector handles the entire re-grid, rebuild of Texas and Florida, not FEMA. This is a unique situation where the Army Corps is the primary builder of the re-grid because they had to be, and it was the only option that we really had.

The other thing is, is that in some cases, in all fairness, when you do EMAC requests, a traditional mutual aid assistance request is a contract between Governors, not between FEMA and a Governor. It is between Governors. And so, with the liquidity issues, people are reluctant to go to Puerto Rico until there is 100 percent reimbursement to make sure that they would get paid for their services and reimbursed for their time and materials. That is also the other issue that we were facing because of the financial situation that we found Puerto Rico in.

This is not a traditional disaster response. If anybody in the room wants to rebuild Puerto Rico to a standard to where we don't walk through this again, it is me.

Mr. CARTER. And I understand that. And this a government-owned system, government monopoly-type system, and it is very clear they haven't kept up on the maintenance of the system. But they described it to me as if you are dealing with a tube radio.

Mr. LONG. You are exactly right. As I understand from the Army Corps testimony, that the average age of that power system is 44 years old. FEMA can't control that. I don't know who can, but it is a problem I am facing with working with the Governor to fix.

Mr. CARTER. And one of my questions, if we were able to figure out a way for the Corps to build a more modern, up-to-date system, which is going to be extremely expensive, I am sure, one of the issues you would have to say, if they have had a hard time maintaining a 44-year old system, is there going to be money available, or is that going to be the state's problem to train up the technicians to keep the new system we give them up to date because you can't fix it because you don't know how? There is a lot of difference in a 44-year-old system than a system today.

Mr. LONG. Sure, so it is my understanding—and this is a great question for the Army Corps of Engineers. I do not want to speak on their behalf, but it is my understanding just by rebuilding the power grid to the CONUS, continental United States, building your electrical grid standards, you are already making tremendous improvements.

Mr. CARTER. Yes, I assumed that.

Mr. LONG. And we are going to learn a lot as a result of going through this, through this process. It is not an ideal situation. There is nothing easy about Puerto Rico from FEMA's perspective.

Mr. CARTER. We all have compassion for those American citizens in Puerto Rico.

Mr. LONG. We do. I do too. I do as well.

Mr. CARTER. Well, thank you so much. This has been very enlightening and pleasing to know that we have got folks that are being creative in Federal Government. And we like your creativity. We look forward to working with you. This committee is going to be pledging to get their job done, and we will get it done.

Mr. LONG. Thank you.

Mr. CARTER. The subcommittee stands adjourned. Thank you.

[CLERK'S NOTE: The Department did not respond with answers to submitted questions in time for inclusion in the record. Any material received after printing will be on file in the committee office.]