

**PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE, AND REBUILDING:
LESSONS FROM THE 2017 DISASTERS**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE, AND REBUILD- ING: LESSONS FROM THE 2017 DISASTERS

Thursday, March 15, 2018

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:39 a.m., in room HVC-210, Capitol Visitor Center, Hon. Michael T. McCaul (Chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Representatives McCaul, Rogers, Perry, Ratcliffe, Donovan, Higgins, Rutherford, Estes, Bacon, Thompson, Jackson Lee, Langevin, Richmond, Keating, Payne, Vela, Watson Coleman, and Demings.

Also present: Representative Velázquez; Delegate Plaskett; Resident Commissioner, Puerto Rico, González-Colón.

Chairman MCCAUL. Committee on Homeland Security will come to order. The committee is meeting today to examine the lessons learned from last year's disasters, including the preparedness response and recovery efforts for Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, in order to better prepare for future disasters. This is also Administrator Long's first appearance before the Homeland Security Committee. Welcome, sir.

I welcome the opportunity to learn more about your priorities and vision for the future of FEMA. I also see that we have members joining us today that are not on the committee. I ask unanimous consent that Resident Commissioner González-Colón, Congresswoman Velázquez, and Delegate Stacey Plaskett be allowed to sit at the dais and participate in today's hearing. Without objection, so ordered.

I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

This morning our committee has gathered to review our ability to prepare, respond, and rebuild, in the wake of the natural disasters of 2017.

Before we begin, I would like to extend my heartfelt condolences to the victims of the recent bombings in my home city of Austin. These heinous attacks need to stop. No one should ever be afraid to open their front door and pick up a package. We will find out who is responsible for these murders and make sure they are brought to justice.

While they are constant targets of foreign and domestic terrorists, cybercriminal gangs like MS-13 and human trafficking, today's hearing will focus on the dangers of natural disasters.

In 2017, there were 65 major disasters declared. They included hurricanes that hit my home State of Texas, Florida, the U.S. Vir-

gin Islands, and Puerto Rico. We also saw dozens of wildfires burn through thousands of acres and destroy everything in their path.

After Hurricane Harvey hit Texas, I personally toured the devastated communities in my district, as well as the city of Houston. Days of punishing rain, rising rivers, and overflowing bayous wreaked havoc on much of the State.

This destruction was horrifying. Roads were flooded, many homes were obliterated, and sadly, many people lost their lives. But as I witnessed the strength of the Texas spirit that was the positive. Many volunteers hopped into their boats to rescue people who were stranded on the rooftops or trapped in a vehicle. Others waded out into the murky waters filled with snakes and fire ants to save their loved ones or even to help a stranger.

Texans helping Texans rose to the challenge and assisted one another during a very tough time. Strong coordination at the local, State, and Federal levels with FEMA and Army Corps of Engineers played a key role as well. I commend the efforts of the response in Hurricane Harvey.

This kind of teamwork was also evident in Florida after Hurricane Irma. Unfortunately, Hurricane Maria completely shattered Puerto Rico. Even today much of the island is still struggling to recover. It is important that we learn from the lessons of each of these storms, so we are better prepared in the future.

Natural disasters bring a lot of harm, but they also provide an opportunity to put our differences aside and work together. I am proud to say that both parties came together to pass a supplemental relief package that provided billions of dollars to the Disaster Relief Fund and the National Flood Insurance Program. It is always our goal to make sure FEMA has the resources and capabilities it needs before it is called into action.

The first-ever comprehensive reauthorization of DHS that passed the House in July will strengthen our first responders and front-line defenders. I am encouraged that the Senate has finally taken action on this reauthorization bill, and I hope to have that passed soon and sent to the President.

I would also like to personally thank each of today's witnesses for being with us here this morning. Shortly after Hurricane Harvey, I met with Administrator Long at FEMA's headquarters to receive a briefing during the initial recovery. While there I could see first-hand the dedication and professionalism of the men and women who sprung into action during that time of crisis.

I am very grateful for their service and for the efforts and all of our partners at the Federal, State, and local level.

With that I yield back.

[The statement of Chairman McCaul follows:]

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MICHAEL T. MCCAUL

MARCH 15, 2018

This morning our committee has gathered to review our ability to prepare, respond, and rebuild, in the wake of the natural disasters of 2017.

Before we begin, I would like to extend my heartfelt condolences to the victims of the recent bombings in my home city of Austin.

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I am encouraged that the Senate has finally started to take action on this and I am hopeful a reauthorization of DHS will be sent to the President soon.

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While there I could see first-hand, the dedication and professionalism of the men and women who spring into action during a natural disaster.

I am very grateful for their service and for the efforts of all of our partners at the Federal, State, and local level.

I now recognize Ranking Member Thompson for an opening statement.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Chair now recognizes the Ranking Member, Mr. Thompson.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. To begin, today I would also like to express my condolences to the families of the victims of the recent Austin packaging bombings. My thoughts and prayers are with those who lost their lives, as well as the survivors.

Turning to today's hearing, as you know, Mr. Chairman, we were originally scheduled to have FEMA Administrator Brock Long before this committee in November of last year. Unfortunately, you abruptly canceled the hearing after the Democrats invited the mayor of San Juan, Puerto Rico to testify about the effects of Hurricane Maria on her community.

That troubling turn of events occurred shortly after Administrator Long publicly stated that he had filtered out the mayor a long time ago. I am not sure when it becomes acceptable to be

dismissive of an official representing an American city devastated by a natural disaster.

Next week marks 6 months since Hurricane Maria made landfall on Puerto Rico, sending the island into darkness and changing life for nearly 3.3 million Americans. Still today, thousands of Puerto Ricans, or 10 percent of the population, have yet to have power restored.

The Puerto Rican economy continues to struggle as a result of the devastation to infrastructure, homes, and businesses. Hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans have moved to the mainland in the wake of the storm, perhaps never to return.

So while I am pleased the committee is finally holding this important hearing, to say it is long overdue would be an understatement.

The 2017 Atlantic hurricane season was among the most active on record with 17 named storms. Three major storms caused devastation in Texas, Florida, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. The response to those storms by the Trump administration was a study in contrast.

After Harvey, President Trump tweeted, Texas, we are with you today. We are with you tomorrow, and we will be with you every single day after to restore, recover, and rebuild. President later visited the affected area just 4 days later. This is what Americans expect from the President and their Federal Government in the wake of disaster.

Similarly, after Hurricane Irma struck Florida, President Trump tweeted, Just like Texas, we are with you today. We are with you tomorrow and we will be with you every single day after to restore, recover, and rebuild. Again, the President visited 4 days later, as it should be.

But after Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico and parts of the U.S. Virgin Islands, President Trump's words and actions were decidedly different. He tweeted: We cannot keep FEMA, the military, and the first responders who have been amazing under the most difficult circumstances in Puerto Rico forever.

The President also said the government of Puerto Rico wanted everything to be done for them and accused officials of poor leadership. When he finally showed up in Puerto Rico 2 weeks after the storm made landfall, he chucked rolls of paper towels at survivors.

President Trump did not even bother to visit the U.S. Virgin Islands. For an American President to behave in such a way is beyond the pale. Keeping with the President's action, the Federal Government's response was decidedly different after each storm.

FEMA had supplies and personnel pre-positioned before Hurricane Harvey made landfall on August 25 and shortly thereafter the Federal Government had more than 31,000 of Federal employees on the ground in support of the response.

FEMA also provided 3 million meals and 3 million liters of water for Harvey survivors.

Likewise for Irma, there were more than 40,000 Federal personnel, including 2,600 FEMA staff, on the ground just before the storm struck on September 10. FEMA also provided 6.6 million meals and 4.7 million liters of water to the region in the days just after Irma made landfall.

The Trump administration's response to Maria was far slower and smaller. Even weeks after the storm, there were only a fraction of the Federal personnel on the ground in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands as has been deployed to Texas and Florida.

Food and water were in short supply. The Federal contracts to provide essentials like tarps and meals were botched, further slowing the response. Electrical outages to critical facilities like hospitals required doctors in Puerto Rico to perform life-saving surgery using the light of their cell phones.

Doctors in the U.S. Virgin Islands saw the only hospital on St. Thomas badly damaged, rendering its medical floor and cancer treatment facility unusable. Despite the devastation, it took 43 days for President Trump to approve public assistance program disaster aid to Puerto Rico, quadruple the amount of time it took to approve such assistance to Texas and Florida.

I understand the delay was due to the Trump administration's imposing conditions on this aid never before required of any community, a deal some have called the Puerto Rico Special.

Meanwhile, the President found the time to spend several days at his Trump properties golfing, holding multiple fundraisers, fighting with NFL players about taking a knee during a game, and tweet about everything from fake news to the Russian hoax. That is not the kind of leadership the people of Puerto Rico or any American affected by disasters expect or deserve.

Today I hope to hear from our first panel of witnesses about how the Federal Government is using funding approved by Congress to support response and recovery in communities hit by hurricanes, wildfires, and other recent disasters.

I am particularly interested in hearing from Administrator Long about the lessons learned from these disasters and how FEMA can be a better prepared to respond in the future. For the witnesses on our second panel, I hope to hear your perspective on the Federal response and what we can do to support your recovery going forward.

FEMA's mission is supposed to be helping people before, during, and after disasters. It is our job to conduct the oversight necessary to ensure the agency fulfills that mission, so I look forward to our discussion today.

[The statement of Ranking Member Thompson follows:]

STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER BENNIE G. THOMPSON

MARCH 15, 2018

We were originally scheduled to have FEMA Administrator Brock Long before this committee in November of last year. Unfortunately, you abruptly canceled the hearing after the Democrats invited the Mayor of San Juan, Puerto Rico to testify about the effects of Hurricane Maria on her community. That troubling turn of events occurred shortly after Administrator Long publicly stated that he had "filtered out the Mayor a long time ago." I am not sure when it became acceptable to be dismissive of an official representing an American city devastated by a natural disaster.

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In keeping with the President's actions, the Federal Government's response was decidedly different after each storm. FEMA had supplies and personnel pre-positioned before Hurricane Harvey made landfall on August 25 and, shortly thereafter, the Federal Government had more than 31,000 of Federal employees on the ground in support of the response. FEMA also provided 3 million meals and 3 million liters of water for Harvey survivors. Likewise, for Irma, there were more than 40,000 Federal personnel, including 2,650 FEMA staff, on the ground just days after the storm struck on September 10. FEMA also provided 6.6 million meals and 4.7 million liters of water to the region in the days just after Irma made landfall.

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FEMA's mission is supposed to be "helping people before, during, and after disasters." It is our job to conduct the oversight necessary to ensure the agency fulfills that mission, so I look forward to our discussion today.

Mr. THOMPSON. Mr. Chairman, you recognized two Members who are here, Ms. Plaskett and Ms. Velázquez, and I ask unanimous consent that they be allowed to give their statement at this time.

Chairman McCAUL. Yes. Yes, Without objection, so ordered. Other Members are reminded that statements may be submitted for the record.

[The statement of Hon. Jackson Lee follows:]

STATEMENT OF HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

MARCH 15, 2018

Chairman McCaul and Ranking Member Thompson, thank you for this hearing that will engage Federal, State, and local witnesses regarding FEMA's disaster preparedness and response capabilities during the historic events of Hurricane Season 2017.

I look forward to the testimony of today's witnesses.

Panel I, The Honorable William B. "Brock" Long, Administrator, FEMA, U.S. Department of Homeland Security; Major General Donald E. "Ed" Jackson, Jr., Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations, United States Army Corps of Engineers; and The Honorable John V. Kelly, Acting Inspector General, Department of Homeland Security (Democratic Witness).

Panel II, Mr. Wesley Maul, Director, Division of Emergency Management, State of Florida; The Honorable Jose E. Meléndez-Ortiz, Vice-Chairman, House Committee on Federal and International Relations, and Status, Puerto Rico House of Representatives; Mr. Reed Clay, Counselor and Chief Operating Officer, the Office of Governor Greg Abbott, State of Texas; and The Honorable Carmen Yulín Cruz Soto, Mayor, San Juan, Puerto Rico (Democratic Witness).

The Hurricane Season of 2017 was both historic and horrific for residents of Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Harvey, Irma, Jose, and Maria took lives, damaged communities.

Our National resolve must be firm in staying the course on the necessary work to rebuild and restore communities completely.

I will speak on the needs and experiences of my Houston District and surrounding area, but I first want to speak to the tragic situation that occurred when our Nation failed to respond to the imminent and articulable threat posed by Hurricane Maria to the Island of Puerto Rico.

Hurricane Maria slammed into Puerto Rico with 155 miles-per-hour winds with predictable catastrophic results that were compounded by a lack of follow-up work that should have considered the logistics of delivery of prepositioned supplies on the island being delivered to hard-hit areas in rural and mountain regions.

There was not a resident on the island of Puerto Rico who was not a storm survivor and for this reason alone any plan to depend on local drivers to drive tractor trailers over damaged roads and failing infrastructure was not realistic.

The delay in bringing in the military, which is the go-to agency for large-scale events, was too slow for the scope of Maria's damage to the island.

The lack of planning to get to people who were without power and likely in danger of succumbing to illness and medication-dependent treatments like diabetes.

The controversy over not having accurate official reports of storm-related deaths, which are reported as 66, but credible investigations in to deaths put the figures on the death over 1,000 from Hurricane Maria.

Following Hurricane Maria and the island-wide disruption in electric power led to granting a \$20 million contract to a electric utility company that reportedly employed 3 employees in its small Colorado office, but later was dropped when it became public.

Puerto Rico has the Nation's largest manufacturer of saline solution that is used routinely in hospitals around the Nation was shut down due to storm damage.

A National shortage of saline was caused by the Hurricane Maria damage at the beginning of a peak in flu around the Nation.

Hurricane Harvey left the Texas coast struggling with recovery following the largest housing disaster in our Nation's history.

HURRICANE HARVEY BY THE NUMBERS

Hurricane Harvey was a Category 4 storm that hit Texas on August 25, 2017.

Harvey made landfall along the Texas coast three separate times in 6 days.

The nine-county Houston metro area impacted by Hurricane Harvey covers 9,444 square miles, an area larger than five States, including New Hampshire, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

Harris County, Texas covers 1,778 square miles, enough space to fit New York City, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, Seattle, Austin, and Dallas, with room still to spare.

There was over 41,500 square miles of land mass impacted by Hurricane Harvey and the subsequent flooding that covered an area larger than the States of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont combined.

Hurricane Harvey dropped 21 trillion gallons of rainfall on Texas and Louisiana, most of it on the Houston Metroplex.

In September 2017, NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory reported that Hurricane Harvey's rainfall created 275 trillion pounds of water, which caused the crust in and around Houston to deform and sink nearly 2 inches because of the weight.

Harvey dropped 51.88 inches of rain near Cedar Bayou, the highest total ever recorded for a single U.S. weather event.

At its peak on September 1, 2017, one-third of Houston was under water.

At the peak on August 31, there were 34,575 evacuees in shelters across Texas.

Hurricane Harvey is the largest housing disaster to strike the United States in our Nation's history.

Hurricane Harvey damaged 203,000 homes, of which 12,700 were destroyed.

In November 18,292 hotel rooms in over 1,500 hotels were still occupied by persons displaced by Hurricane Harvey.

Thousands of others with severe damage to their homes are living with family or friends.

A 889,425 people have registered for assistance with the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

In October 2017, I requested and received a status report on Housing Assistance Claims from FEMA.

At that time there were 270,000 applications for Housing Assistance in Houston and the surrounding area.

There were systemic problems with:

- staffing up with sufficient numbers of FEMA Claim Inspectors;
- insufficient notice to residents of storm damaged homes to be able to meet FEMA Claim Inspectors at their property for an assessment;
- No use of social media to keep property owners informed regarding progress to reach them for an inspection.
- No ability to use housing options like Air-BNB, which could accommodate Harvey-displaced persons who found shelter with family members, friends, or strangers.
- No ability to accept requests for assistance from more than one claimant for each address—ignoring those multi-generational homes are a reality in Houston.
- No grant program for small businesses who may not qualify for a SBA Loan.

On March 5, 2018, I held a Road to Recovery Town Hall meeting at Kashmere High School located in the 18th Congressional District.

I thank you Administrator Long for providing FEMA participation in that important Town Hall meeting, FEMA Claims Experts to work one-on-one with residents who were in need of assistance regarding claims denials or who may be in housing that is transitional, or temporary such as the case if you are living with family, friends, or in hotels.

The Red Cross also participated in this important Town Hall to share their experience with working victims of Hurricane Katrina and Sandy during the long-term recoveries that took place following those disasters.

Over 300 people attending that Town Hall to seek assistance in resolving FEMA claim application denials.

This was only one neighborhood of the hundreds of neighborhoods impacted by Hurricane Harvey.

We need to do more events of this nature to get help to those who are in need of assistance.

In October 2017, there were 164,253 who were ineligible for assistance; 116,214 had claims denied because of insufficient damage; 19,962 were ineligible because of possible duplication; 1,298 missed inspections, and 8,229 had not contact information on their FEMA Application.

In Texas FEMA's role in disaster preparedness, and response was effective, but the long-term recovery is not moving at a pace that would assure that we are meeting the true need that exists.

CONGRESSWOMAN JACKSON LEE'S EFFORTS POST-HURRICANE HARVEY

Ten days following Hurricane Harvey, I introduced H.R. 3686, the Hurricane Harvey Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2017, that would provide nearly \$174 billion to help those impacted by the storm and their communities to recover.

H.R. 3686 was introduced with 44 original sponsors, who joined me in supporting funding for Texas Hurricane Harvey Recovery.

The bill's \$174 billion in funding provided by H.R. 3686 represents a comprehensive response commensurate to the challenge; specifically my legislation provides relief in the following amounts:

1. Housing and Community Development Fund: \$50 billion
2. FEMA Disaster Relief Fund: \$35 billion
3. Army Corps of Engineers—Construction: \$15 billion
4. Flood Control and Coastal Emergencies: \$13 billion
5. Public Transportation Emergency Relief Program: \$33 billion
6. Small Business Disaster Loans Program: \$2 billion
7. Emergency Conservation Activities: \$650 million
8. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: \$321 million
9. National Aeronautics and Space Administration: \$50 million
10. Legal Services Corporation: \$10 million
11. Army National Guard: \$10 million
12. Army Corps of Engineers—Civil Investigations: \$150 million
13. Coast Guard: \$450 million
14. National Park Service Historic Preservation Fund: \$800 million
15. EPA Environmental Programs and Management: \$2.5 billion
16. EPA Hazardous Substance Superfund: \$7 million
17. Leaking Underground Storage Tank Fund: \$15 million
18. State and Tribal Assistance Grants: \$600 million
19. Employment and Training Services: \$100 million
20. Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund: \$2.5 billion
21. Airport and Airway Trust Fund: \$90 million
22. Federal-Aid Highways Emergency Relief Program: \$6.5 billion

I also introduce H.R. 3990, the Small Business Hurricane Harvey Recovery Grants bill to assist small businesses in their recovery following the storm to make sure that neighborhood businesses are able to recover along with the entire community.

A NEW JACKSON LEE BILL TO ADDRESS FEMA DISASTER LONG-TERM RECOVERY

Administrator Long, I want to thank your staff for working with my Policy Director on the initial phase of my outline of a bill to address FEMA Disaster Long-Term Recovery, while ensuring that the important work of disaster response is improved upon.

I will be introducing a comprehensive FEMA Disaster Recovery bill to address post-disaster long-term recovery challenges faced by individuals, families, business owners, as well as local and State governments.

FEMA has done an exemplary job at disaster response.

FEMA is invaluable for its ability to plan, coordinate, and execute very complex plans to meet the disaster response and mitigation needs of local and State governments through collaboration and cooperation among a broad range of Federal Government agencies.

However, there is room for improvement in the area of long-term recovery.

I have listened, and watched as thousands of residents, business owners, families, schools, and local governments have struggled to make it back from this disaster and I am committed to making sure that you have a partner for the long haul.

My bill will address the need for councilors and advisors to support individuals, families, and small businesses through the use of a casework structure that seeks collaborations with State and local government offices, as well as, nonprofits to make sure that each survivor or victim of a designated Federal long-term disaster recovery effort as determined under the perimeters of my bill will be assigned a counselor who will work with them from the moment they seek assistance through each stage of the recovery process until they are back in their home or secure long-term housing after the storm or have been resettled.

After all, we are all individuals, with unique disaster experiences, challenges, strengths, and opportunities that makes recovery a collective and individual journey.

My bill will use quantifiable measures to determine when a "Federal Declared Disaster Long-Term Recovery Project" would be triggered.

The bill would establish a means for local and State governments to be central to the decision-making process regarding the recovery of areas under their jurisdiction.

Finally, my bill will assure that long-term recovery projects established under this FEMA Reform bill will have strict sunset provisions that are linked to the work related to long-term recovery.

The big lesson from disasters that occurred in 2017 is that the Nation must be able to manage multiple catastrophic events at a single time.

The bill that I will be introducing will speak to the experiences that many of you have shared with me.

OTHER EFFORTS TO AID RECOVERY

I worked with the Chair and Ranking Member of the House Appropriations Committee to get funding to support a strong Texas Recovery effort at every opportunity.

As the House considered Supplemental Appropriations bills H.R. 2266 and H.R. 1892, I focused on making sure key provisions that would help those recovering from Hurricane Harvey were included.

HOUSE SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS BILLS

In September 2017, the House passed a bill providing relief for Hurricane Harvey, H.R. 2266, the Additional Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Requirements Act, 2017.

That bill provides:

- FEMA: \$18.67 billion to replenish the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF) and assist the on-going Federal response to hurricanes;
- \$4.9 billion of this total is authorized for transfer to the Community Disaster Loan program;
- Flood Insurance: Cancels \$16 billion in existing National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) debt, which will soon exhaust all financial resources;
- SNAP: Allows up to \$1.27 billion in previously-appropriated funding to be available for disaster-related nutrition assistance in Puerto Rico; and
- Wildfires: Provides \$576.5 million for Federal wildfire suppression.

H.R. 1892 EMERGENCY DISASTER RELIEF FUNDING

In February 2018, the House passed H.R. 1892, to provide additional appropriations of \$89.3 billion in emergency supplemental appropriations to help States, communities, businesses, and individuals respond and recover from Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, and the California wildfires.

I worked to make sure that key provisions were included in H.R. 1892, which were as follows:

1. Authority to establish and implement a \$1 billion pilot program to provide small business disaster recovery grants, modeled on H.R. 3930, the "Hurricane Harvey Small Business Recovery Grants Act," legislation I introduced on October 3, 2017 and is co-sponsored by 16 Members of the House of Representatives.
2. \$75 million for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Investigations account, which is to be used in areas affected by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, and can be used to finance the \$3 million Houston-Area Watershed Assessment Study.
3. This is a highly successful conclusion to the multi-year struggle I waged to secure House approval of this project and funding with the Jackson Lee Amendments to the Energy and Water Appropriations Act for Fiscal Years 2016, 2017, and 2018.
4. The bill also includes helpful legislative language to ensure that in awarding CDBG-Disaster Relief funds to States, the Secretary of HUD should to the maximum extent practicable award grants to units of local government and public housing authorities that have the financial and administrative capacity to manage a grant awarded under the program.
5. The bill also includes a provision for which I advocated expressly providing that religious nonprofit organizations and houses of worship have the same opportunity to qualify for disaster assistance as their secular counterparts.

ROLE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The Federal Government should not run every aspect of our lives—but it is an umbrella on a rainy day—it is a shelter in a powerful storm.

The Federal Government is help when no other source of help can meet the challenges of long-term recovery we may be facing is sufficient.

Hurricane Harvey meets this test.
I look forward to today's hearing.
I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. Just for the record, for the Members, the mayor of San Juan, Puerto Rico was invited to attend this hearing and unfortunately she could not make it today.

Mr. THOMPSON. Well, she is actually in the hospital.

Chairman MCCAUL. Yes, and that is why I said unfortunately.

Mr. THOMPSON. Yes.

Chairman MCCAUL. We are pleased to have two distinguished panels of witnesses before us today on this important topic. Our first includes the Honorable Brock Long, the administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Next we have Major-General Donald Jackson, deputy commanding general of the Civil and Emergency Operations at the United States Army Corps of Engineers, and finally, Mr. John Kelly, not the chief of staff but rather then-acting inspector general of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

The witness' full written statements will be included in the record.

The Chair now recognizes Administrator Long for his opening statement. Yes, sir.

**STATEMENT OF WILLIAM B. "BROCK" LONG, ADMINISTRATOR,
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY, U.S. DE-
PARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

Mr. LONG. Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, distinguished Members of the committee, it is an honor to be here before you in the spirit of improvement. I am here to talk about FEMA's I believe Herculean efforts to put forward response and recovery efforts to help millions of Americans. There is always room for improvement. I am the agency's worst critic by all means.

I have been in this job 9 months and I realize that we have a long way to go, not just as FEMA but as a whole community. It is going to—disaster response and recovery the proper way has to be Federally-supported, State-managed, and locally-executed, and that is the model that we have got to put forward.

I hope today to unveil a new strategic plan right here in this committee, not only to you but to the public today. I know that we have a slide that I would like to display, if possible, that I will break down here in a minute.

To put this season into context by numbers is nearly impossible. The numbers are huge. What we went through, if you look at just Harvey, Irma, Maria, and the California wildfires, each one of these events could have been catastrophic in their own right, much less happening weeks, you know, in rapid succession.

We estimate that roughly 47 million people were impacted by these events. That is 15 percent, 16 percent of the United States population. You know, 47 million people were forced to take a protective action, whether they were asked to shelter in place, evacuate, or whether they lost their home.

It is a tremendous effort to help that amount of people in this country, and we have got a long way to go to improve.

On the response side, the Federal Government's efforts to coordinate search-and-rescue teams can be credited with saving 9,000 lives. There were thousands and thousands more saved at the local level by first responders and State responders and neighbor helping neighbor.

On the recovery side, just to put this into context, we registered 4.7 million people into our individual assistance processes to help kickstart recovery. I can't make people whole, but what we can do is put forward an assistance to help kickstart their recovery.

That number is more than Hurricane Katrina, Sandy, Wilma, and Rita combined and packed into 3, 4, or 5 months in that time period. Today, we still get 13,000 calls a day for assistance that this agency is trying to work through and process.

We learned a lot of lessons. We learned that we have got to work with our private-sector partners to build redundant and resilient communications backbones so that we don't lose communications and the ability to communicate with one another, not only as responders but to our citizens during the response.

We have got to streamline a Federal Government-fragmented recovery process. Aid comes down from 17 different agencies. It is confusing. Governors and mayors don't know what they are entitled to and how to use it for the greatest good. I am willing to take the approach to help Congress formulate a more streamlined approach.

We also have to fix the housing. I am going to ask you for support to help me fix housing and give more granting authorities to Governors going forward to give Governors to put them in this—to give them more control to understand how to help their communities recover from housing missions and not just have it solely on FEMA's shoulders.

There is nothing more important than the trained emergency manager. We have implemented 4,700, roughly, local hires. We have hired roughly 1,300 of the best and brightest Puerto Ricans to help us go through the response and recovery. Technically I might be one of the largest employers over the next couple months within the commonwealth.

We are training them to be emergency managers. We are creating a backbone of emergency management that did not exist before the storm, not only for the commonwealth but for the 78 municipalities. The same thing is being done for the Virgin Islands and other States as well.

We have to invest more in pre-disaster mitigation to reduce the impacts of what we just saw. We have got to put more money up front rather than on the back end. It makes no sense the way we do that in this country.

We have to simplify processes. I have had numerous conversations with many of you about things that get in the way. This agency had to perform 2.3 million home inspections. Put your mind around that for a minute. It takes a lot of people to perform that many. It is a slow, cumbersome process that slows recovery down.

I am asking to do away with the majority of the inspection process and use technology and trust the disaster survivor rather than set up risk-averse systems to protect solely for fraud that draws the system out.

Going forward, the strategic plan, we asked our constituents to—and I asked specifically what do you want FEMA to be good at? Where do you want us to be? What do we need to do? How do we need to get there?

We reached out to our State and local partners. We reached out to nongovernmental organizations. We got 2,300 comments back. As a result, we did a trend analysis and we developed three major goals that my agency is going to strive for going forward. We are asking other agencies involved at the State and local levels to also embrace this as a unified approach.

We have to have a unified approach going forward in disaster response and recovery. The three goals are: One, we don't have a true culture of preparedness in this country. Our citizens are not prepared. We have to realistically design approaches to get them to be financially ready. We have to get them to be—we have got to teach them tangible skills like CPR again, and go back to the old civil defense days of being ready.

We also have to do more pre-disaster mitigation. We have to close the insurance gap. Far too many people are uninsured or underinsured and that is not right. Those who are insured will recover a lot quicker than those that are not. Help me overcome this problem.

The second goal is ready the Nation for catastrophic disasters. We are not ready for the load and no-notice big events like the New Madrid earthquakes or nation-state threat. We have a lot of work to do. I am asking for help.

What I am going to be asking for is we have to have commodity contracts, for example, the ability to do water, food, and MREs or hygiene kits in place at all levels of government. If you are expecting FEMA to do it, that is not a sound plan.

I am wanting to move my staff out of the agency offices in our regional offices and headquarters and I want to put them and embed them every day with State and local agencies and move out so that I can be part of the conversation every day.

Not just being seen in the response and the recovery round, but I want to be seen every day planning, training, exercising, and executing together.

Finally, the third goal, reduce the complexity of FEMA. As I said, I am my own worst critic. I know we have to streamline some processes, specifically we have got to streamline the disaster survivor process. We have to streamline the disaster grantee and sub-grantee process, and that takes a lot of work.

Ultimately, I am asking for your help. I am committed to leading FEMA to ultimately help prepare this Nation and make it more resilient. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Long follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WILLIAM B. "BROCK" LONG

MARCH 15, 2018

INTRODUCTION

Good morning, Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, and Members of the Committee. My name is Brock Long, and I am the administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). I'd like to thank you for the opportunity

to discuss the historic disaster season of 2017, the lessons we've learned, and my plans for the future of FEMA.

I have been in office for just over 8 months, and I am proud to be part of an agency that, every day, is helping communities reduce the risks associated with future disasters, as well as assisting disaster survivors all across the country. Shortly after I was sworn in, Hurricane Harvey struck Texas and Louisiana. Then, Hurricane Irma swept through the Caribbean, striking the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Georgia, South Carolina, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, and the entire State of Florida. Hurricane Maria followed, striking a devastating blow to the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. These hurricanes were followed by devastating wildfires and mudslides in California.

My team at FEMA has been working around the clock for more than 6 months to support the needs of the survivors of these disasters. We have worked tirelessly to support State, local, Tribal, and territorial (SLTT) partners to respond to and recover from disasters, and to mitigate against future disasters. We have faced and overcome many challenges, but we have a long way to go in some areas. In my testimony today, I would like to share with you some of our experiences in recent months, the lessons we are learning in this historic time, my strategic vision for the future of FEMA, as well as the next steps FEMA is taking to prepare for disasters.

2017 HURRICANE SEASON REVIEW

Last year's historic hurricane season was a true test of the Nation's ability to respond to and recover from multiple concurrent disasters. Three major hurricanes—Harvey, Irma, and Maria—made landfall along the Gulf Coast, in the Southeast, and in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The impacts of these storms, in addition to the California wildfires, cannot be overstated. Roughly 47 million people were affected by these events—roughly 15 percent of the entire U.S. population.

In order to deliver disaster assistance to such a large and dispersed number of survivors, FEMA worked in concert with our Federal partner agencies, SLTT governments, and also non-governmental organizations (NGO) and the private sector to ensure a unity of effort that serves the needs of disaster survivors.

In disaster response operations, FEMA's sole focus is saving lives and protecting property. We train, exercise, and evaluate our planning assumptions with our SLTT partners. We make plans based on the best information we can gather from the public and private sectors about the impacts that different types of threats may have on a community or region. We know that no disaster ever goes according to our plans, so we must adapt to the circumstances as they develop. It is not possible to successfully respond to the impact of a major hurricane without errors. But our goal is to ensure that any errors that occur are a result of overestimating need, not underestimating it. It is easy to forget that in addition to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, we also had two other major hurricanes threaten our Nation—Hurricanes Jose and Nate. While Jose never made landfall, we had to plan and prepare for it in case it did. Nate did make landfall, striking Alabama and Mississippi in the Gulf Coast resulting in Major Disaster Declarations in each State.

At FEMA, we are constantly reviewing our program delivery, decision-making processes, and responses to ensure that we improve, minimize errors, and better serve survivors on their worst day. We also are eager to work with Congress and this committee in its oversight capacity to determine if legislative changes are required, and to ensure that we are executing our programs consistent with Congressional intent. We have learned, and will continue to learn, from this historic disaster season.

LESSONS LEARNED

Federally-Supported, State-Managed, Locally-Executed

Some lessons we learn are not new to us, but an affirmation of lessons learned in the past. For example, the optimal disaster response is Federally-supported, State-managed, and locally-executed. This concept is well-known throughout the emergency management community, but this season provided a good case study in why this is important.

All disasters are local, and local governments respond to an untold number of disasters every year. When the resources required to respond to a disaster exceed local capacity, the local government will call upon neighboring jurisdictions to bring in the additional resources needed. Local governments can, and periodically do, turn to county or State governments for additional resources.

When a Governor or Tribal leader turns to the President requesting Federal assistance, and the President agrees to activate Federal resources to support a disaster-stricken State, Tribe, or territory, the Governor or Tribal leader continues to

support the local governments impacted by the disaster. Congress has provided FEMA authorities and resources to support Governors and Tribal leaders, but not to supplant them or the local leaders.

FEMA's ability to provide support in disasters builds on, and is subject to, the capacity of State, territorial, Tribal, and local governments. This is not a new lesson or challenge, but one that we are constantly reminded of. If the State, territorial, Tribal, and local governments are well-resourced, well-trained, and well-organized, the effectiveness of FEMA's assistance is great. If, on the other hand, a State, territorial, Tribal, or local government is not well-resourced, well-trained, and well-organized—either due to ineffective preparations or due to the significance of the disaster itself—FEMA can help, but the response may not be as quick or as effective as we would like it to be.

Survivable and Redundant Communications

In order for FEMA to support the needs of any Governor effectively, the capability gaps at all levels of government must be communicated effectively to FEMA. We saw in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria that their communications infrastructure was so completely devastated that assessing the needs and the capability of the Commonwealth and local governments was extremely difficult.

In Puerto Rico, little of the communications infrastructure survived the hurricane. FEMA quickly worked to ensure that each of the 78 municipalities in Puerto Rico got access to satellite phones so that they could communicate with the Commonwealth that was co-located with FEMA. Communication with satellite phones has limitations, so FEMA began placing personnel in each of the municipalities to further enhance communications between the Commonwealth, local governments, and FEMA.

While these communications challenges were the result of a major hurricane, we need to plan for what survivable communications look like in the context of the potential for a Cascadia or New Madrid earthquake scenario, or other catastrophic events. We, as a Nation, have more work to do in this area.

Disaster Sheltering and Housing

The aftermath of the 2017 hurricane season leaves no doubt that survivor housing is a major challenge. Regardless of the readiness of a State, territorial, Tribal, or local government, when dealing with the displacement of tens of thousands of survivors from their homes, there is no easy or one-size-fits-all solution.

There are many community-based and National non-profit organizations that do outstanding work in providing temporary sheltering options for survivors, in order to help survivors have a safe place to stay while they catch their breath and consider next steps in the recovery process. Additionally, FEMA has authorities to provide for sheltering options including the Transitional Sheltering Assistance (TSA) program that pays for survivors to stay in hotel rooms, as well as a program that provides for basic and temporary home repairs to make a home safe and habitable while the survivor makes arrangements for more permanent repairs. Any sheltering option is, by design, a temporary, short-term solution, designed to be a bridge to middle- and longer-term solutions.

We have other programs and authorities that assist with temporary housing: Rental assistance, multi-family lease program, mobile housing units, and others. Additionally, we provide survivors assistance with repairing a damaged home including financial assistance for repair, and direct assistance for temporary repairs that help return survivors to their homes.

With all of these options, we partner with our SLTT stakeholder to identify the sheltering and housing solutions that make most sense for each State, each event, each community, and each survivor. The State of Texas, for example, is taking a very hands-on approach to managing housing solutions for their residents after Hurricane Harvey. States have a much better familiarity with the needs of their residents, the local laws and ordinances that can impact some of the FEMA housing options, and are much better situated to design and administer to the survivors in their communities. The provision of shelter and temporary housing is a complicated and difficult process that needs more work. Regardless of the tools we are able to provide, however, permanent housing solutions are best addressed by insurance. As we know, though, there are too many people in our Nation that are underinsured or not insured at all.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Throughout this challenging hurricane and wildfire season, I have seen many practices, programs, and ideas put to test that no intra-agency brainstorming session could accomplish. These experiences have informed my Strategic Plan moving

forward, to: (1) Build a Culture of Preparedness; (2) Ready the Nation for Catastrophic Disasters; and (3) Reduce the Complexity of FEMA.

Build a Culture of Preparedness

FEMA is just one part of the team. During a disaster, citizens in the impacted communities also become the “first responders.” We need to empower individuals with life skills to help speed the response and recovery efforts.

Do they know how to shut off water and gas? Do they check on their neighbors? Do they know CPR? Are they financially prepared to deal with the impacts of disasters in their communities, including having the right insurance for the disasters they face—be they flood, earthquakes, tornadoes, etc.? Do they have some modest level of savings to allow them to miss a few days of work without ending up in financial ruin?

Developing resilient communities ahead of an incident reduces loss of life and economic disruption. When communities are impacted, they should ensure that they rebuild infrastructure better, tougher, and stronger to protect taxpayer investment and promote economic stability.

FEMA is exploring ways to encourage additional investments in mitigation that reduce risk, including pre-disaster mitigation, to help reduce disaster costs at all levels.

While we’ll never be able to eliminate risk, we must mitigate risk. FEMA will work with communities and insurers to close the insurance gap across the Nation. Managing risk through insurance, including the National Flood Insurance Program, helps communities to recover faster following disasters and reduces costs for taxpayers.

Ready the Nation for Catastrophic Disasters

We can’t just continue to plan, train, and exercise for what’s easy. We need to prepare for catastrophic events that stress our logistics, supply chain, continuity of operations, communications, and staffing capacities—just to name a few.

Meanwhile, communities must increase their capacity to respond to smaller-scale disasters—locally. We will continue to work with our State, territorial, Tribal, and local partners to increase their capacities to respond and recover from smaller-scale disasters so FEMA and its Federal partners can focus some more on readiness for catastrophic events. We need to ensure we’re not just ready for catastrophic hurricanes, but also for other natural disasters and hybrid threats.

I am placing members of the FEMA team in State emergency operations centers to jointly plan with States to build this catastrophic capability.

Reduce the Complexity of FEMA

FEMA is committed to simplifying our processes and putting survivors first. We must look at ways we can streamline our assistance programs to make FEMA’s programs as clear and easy as possible for survivors and grantees to navigate.

I have charged my staff with reducing administrative and bureaucratic burdens, so that survivors and communities receive assistance more quickly. Throughout the Federal Government, there are a number of programs that offer assistance to survivors. We are working with our partners to streamline and consolidate some of these activities to ensure survivors can better navigate our various programs.

FEMA employees must have transparency and clarity in the processes and resources they deal with. We can’t implement any of these priorities and initiatives without ensuring that they meet the needs of our survivors. We also need to make sure that we continue to capture lessons learned by FEMA and our partners to meet the needs of survivors with disabilities and others with access and functional needs.

These are my priorities, and this is my vision. As we examine and develop these priorities, we will find that some can be accomplished by existing authorities Congress has already provided to us. There will be some challenges, however, that cannot be solved by administrative action alone. As we identify those, we will work closely with this committee and the rest of Congress to ensure we move forward in close partnership. All of you have constituents that may one day need FEMA assistance. I look forward to working with you on our shared goal to help people before, during, and after disasters.

NEXT STEPS

As we continue with recovery operations resulting from recent disasters, FEMA is also focused on making sure we are as prepared as possible for the upcoming hurricane season. For example, the National Level Exercise (NLE) 2018 will occur in May. This exercise will examine the ability of all levels of government, private industry, non-governmental organizations, communities, and individuals to respond to

and recover from a major hurricane with localized catastrophic impacts. A series of seminars, workshops, and tabletop exercises are being developed to address key functional topics. Recent real-world events will help make NLE 2018 a more realistic, relevant exercise, and help ensure we are well-prepared for the 2018 hurricane season, and beyond.

NLE 2018 consists of four overarching exercise objectives: Pre-landfall protective actions; sustained response in parallel with recovery planning; continuity in a natural disaster; and power outages and critical interdependencies.

As we do before every hurricane season, we are reviewing our hurricane response plans and procedures, updating our high-priority National-level contracts, and enhancing our disaster response capabilities (for example, FEMA is adding 300 new emergency generators to our inventory).

Also, thanks to action taken by Congress, FEMA now has new authorities given to us in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 to further support the Nation's response and recovery efforts prior to the upcoming hurricane season.

For example, in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, FEMA may provide Public Assistance funding for critical services to replace or restore systems to industry standards without restrictions based on their pre-disaster condition. The law further allows FEMA to provide assistance for critical services to replace or restore components of the facility or system that are not damaged by the disaster when it is necessary to fully effectuate the replacement or restoration of disaster-damaged components to restore the function of the facility or system to industry standards.

Recognizing the importance of mitigation, Congress also included a provision that directs FEMA to provide hazard mitigation assistance for recipients of Fire Management Assistance Grants in Fiscal Years 2017 and 2018. The law also codified FEMA's recent policy change to make houses of worship eligible for Public Assistance repair and replacement assistance.

CONCLUSION

This last year's hurricane and wildfire season was and is historic, and is shaping the future of FEMA and emergency management. My priorities are to build a culture of preparedness, ready the Nation for catastrophic events, and reduce the complexity of FEMA. I ask this committee and Congress for your continued support as we undertake these efforts.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to any questions you may have.



Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you, Administrator.
The Chair now recognizes Major General Jackson.

STATEMENT OF MAJOR GENERAL DONALD E. "ED" JACKSON, JR., DEPUTY COMMANDING GENERAL, CIVIL AND EMERGENCY OPERATIONS, UNITED STATES ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

General JACKSON. Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, distinguished Members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

The Corps conducts emergency response activities under two basic authorities: The Stafford Act and Public Law 84-99. Under the Stafford Act, we support FEMA under the National response framework as the lead Federal agency for emergency support function through a public works and engineering.

ESF-3 provides temporary emergency power, temporary roofing, debris management, infrastructure assessment, critical public facility restoration, and temporary housing. Under Pub. L. 84-99, we plan, prepare for, and recover from disasters in coordination with local, State, and Federal partners.

When disasters occur, Corps teams and other resources are mobilized from across the command to assist local offices with their response to the event. As part of this mission, the Corps has more than 50 specially-trained teams supported by emergency contracts which perform the wide range of ESF-3 support missions.

The Corps uses pre-awarded contracts that can be quickly activated for missions, such as debris removal, temporary roofing, and generator installation.

This year, the Corps has supported FEMA-led Federal response and recovery operations in support of multiple events, including wildfires in California and Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria. Two of our divisions are currently fighting seasonal flooding along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers today and their tributaries.

The Corps was given three mission assignments by FEMA in support of southern California wildfires and mudslides. Debris removal is complete in 10 of 11 debris basins and channel reaches across six cities. We expect this to be complete by the end of April.

The Corps was given 7 mission assignments by FEMA in support of northern California wildfires. Eighty-five percent of private property debris removal and remediation is complete in Lake, Mendocino, Napa, and Sonoma Counties. We expect this to be complete by the end of March.

The Corps was given 27 mission assignments by FEMA in support of Hurricane Harvey response and recovery. This includes missions in all six ESF-3 mission areas, to include navigation restoration under our Pub. L. 84-99 authority. Temporary housing, critical public facilities, and debris management support is on-going.

The Corps was given 46 Irma-related mission assignments and 39 Maria-related mission assignments by FEMA. This included missions, again, in all 6 ESF-3 mission areas, to include navigation restoration, levee and dam safety under our 84-99 authority.

As of this morning, the Corps has completed over 2,100 temporary generator installations in the Caribbean, including 180 in the U.S. Virgin Islands and over 1,900 in Puerto Rico.

The mission is complete in the U.S. Virgin Islands with 890 generators still installed at critical facilities across Puerto Rico. Under

FEMA authority, we continue to assist Puerto Rico with operation and maintenance of critical non-Federal generators across the island.

And 5 of 9 1–2 megawatt microgrids installed in support of power grid restoration in Puerto Rico remain in service today. This includes one in Vieques. We expect the temporary power mission to end mid-May.

The Corps has completed over 78,000 temporary roofing installations, including over 13,000 in Florida, over 3,600 in the U.S. Virgin Islands and over 59,000 in Puerto Rico. Missions in Florida and the U.S. Virgin Islands are complete and we have less than 300 remaining to complete in Puerto Rico. We expect to be complete by the first week of April.

Corps debris subject-matter experts provided technical assistance to Florida and Georgia in response to Hurricane Irma. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, debris removal is 94 percent complete with final pickup scheduled today for St. Thomas and St. John.

In Puerto Rico, debris removal is 92 percent complete. Our debris teams are actively working in 38 municipalities with debris removal complete in 17 municipalities. We expect to be complete with all debris removal and disposal by mid-June.

The Corps worked closely with officials in Texas and Florida to manage local flood control reservoirs during periods of unprecedented rainfall. In Puerto Rico, Corps dam and levee teams inspected 17 priority dams and worked closely with the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority, or PREPA, to stabilize a spillway failure at the Guajataca dam.

On 30 September the Corps was given a FEMA mission assignment under Stafford Act authority to assist the commonwealth in conducting emergency repairs to the power grid itself. Unlike our ESF–3 mission areas, the Corps did not have pre-awarded contracts to use for this effort. Instead, we competitively awarded contracts for temporary power generation, line repair, and logistic support and transportation required to support the mission.

This included acquiring over \$283 million in materials critical to the restoration effort, many with unique specifications for the Puerto Rican grid. The Corps is partnering with PREPA in this effort and have energized almost 92 percent of customers thus far.

In coordination with FEMA, PREPA, and the commonwealth, we have begun to gradually right-size our contracted work force. The demobilization of Corps line repair contractors will be complete late April. Remaining work will be turned over to crews under the control of PREPA.

The Corps will continue to operate turbines at Palo Seco and Yabucoa through late April as PREPA completes repairs to the plants at these sites. Remaining materials will be used to complete grid repairs and replenish depleted inventories on the island through mid-May.

The Corps remains committed and capable of executing its other civil works activities across the Nation despite our heavy involvement in these on-going response and recovery operations. We also remain ready and poised to assist in future events as they may occur.

This concludes my testimony, and I look forward to answering any questions you might have. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of General Jackson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MAJOR GENERAL DONALD E. "ED" JACKSON, JR.

MARCH 15, 2018

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the subcommittee: I am honored to testify before you today to discuss the authorities and responsibilities of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) during disaster response and recovery operations. I am Major General Ed Jackson, Deputy Commanding General, Civil and Emergency Operations, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps).

The Corps conducts its emergency response activities under two basic authorities: The Stafford Disaster and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act); and Public Law 84-99, 33 U.S.C. 701n as amended (Public Law 84-99). Under the Stafford Act, we and other Federal agencies support the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) under the National Response Framework (NRF). In this capacity, the Corps is the lead Federal agency for Emergency Support Function 3 (Public Works and Engineering), but works under FEMA's direction. ESF-3 provides Temporary Emergency Power, Temporary Roofing, Debris Management, Emergency Infrastructure Assessment, Critical Public Facility Restoration, Temporary Housing, Demolition/Structural Stabilization, and support to FEMA Command and Control Nodes/ESF-3. Under Public Law 84-99, we prepare for disasters through planning, coordination, and training with local, State, Federal partners; and by assisting State and local entities in implementing advance measures to prevent/reduce storm event damages. After the emergency event, Public Law 84-99 authorizes the Corps to repair damage to authorized Corps projects, and work with States/municipalities to rehabilitate and restore eligible non-Federal flood infrastructure to pre-storm conditions.

When disasters occur, Corps teams and other resources are mobilized from across the country to assist the local Corps districts and offices respond to the event. As part of this mission, the Corps has more than 50 specially-trained response teams, supported by emergency contracts, to perform the wide range of public works and engineering-related support missions I just described. Additionally, the Corps uses pre-awarded contracts that can be quickly activated for missions such as debris removal, temporary roofing, and generator installation.

2017 Hurricane Season.—With regard to hurricane activity, 2017 was an unusually active season. The Corps was, and continues to be, involved in the FEMA-led Federal response and recovery operations in support of multiple events, including Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria.

Hurricane Harvey.—On August 25, 2017, Category 4 Hurricane Harvey made landfall along the central Texas coast near Rockport, Texas, between Port Aransas and Port O'Connor and the President approved an Expedited Major Disaster Declaration for Texas. Large amounts of rainfall fell across the greater Houston metropolitan area causing record flooding. FEMA has identified \$126 million in Mission Assignments for the Corps to assist in Hurricane Harvey response and recovery. Currently, the Corps has 130 Corps employees deployed to support recovery mission assignments.

Temporary Emergency Power.—The Corps completed its temporary emergency power mission assignment in Texas by completing 45 generator installations over the course of the mission.

Temporary Housing.—In the 31 disaster-impacted Texas counties, an estimated 9,300 applicants are eligible for temporary housing. Corps Technical Monitors (TMs) are inspecting approximately 400 haul and install unit installations a day and certifying approximately 150 Mobile Housing Units (MHUs) as Ready for Occupancy per week. To date, the Corps has assessed over 3,300 private sites (homeowner property) and over 1,200 commercial mobile home parks. Corps Group Site personnel have assessed more than 330 potential group site locations and continue to assess sites as directed by FEMA.

Debris Management.—Debris teams led by Corps subject-matter experts continue to provide State and county officials with technical assistance in defining requirements and monitoring debris removal and disposal operations in 10 counties.

Hurricanes Irma and Maria.—Category 5 Hurricane Irma made landfall over the U.S. Virgin Islands on September 6, 2017, while also impacting Puerto Rico with Category 2 winds, 12-foot storm surge and up to 20 inches of rain. Hurricane Irma

made landfall in southern Florida/Florida Keys on September 9, 2017. Soon thereafter, Category 5 Hurricane Maria made landfall over Puerto Rico on September 20, 2017, causing major damage to critical infrastructure and homes. FEMA has identified over \$3 billion in Mission Assignments for the Corps through ESF-3 to assist in Hurricanes Irma and Maria response and recovery (46 Mission Assignments totaling \$177 million for Hurricane Irma and 39 Mission Assignments totaling \$2.91 billion for Hurricane Maria). Currently, the Corps has over 840 personnel deployed in various locations supporting the recovery missions.

Temporary Emergency Power.—As of March 8, 2018, the Corps and its contractors have executed 1,955 of 2,092 taskings received (for temporary generators) in Puerto Rico and 1,779 generator installations; the Corps is continuing to support this line of effort. The Corps and its contractors concluded its temporary emergency power mission assignment in the U.S. Virgin Islands on February 20, 2018; the Corps installed 180 generators during this mission. Fifteen generators remain installed and are managed under a FEMA contract to provide additional stability to critical facilities in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Temporary Roofing.—In order for the Corps and its contractors to install temporary covering (blue roof), the Government and its contractors require validated rights of entry. The Corps completed its temporary roofing mission assignment in Florida with 13,370 blue roofs installed. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Corps installed 3,658 blue roofs over the course of the mission. As of March 8, 2018, in Puerto Rico, the Corps and its contractors have completed 59,292 blue roof installations and collected over 60,683 rights of entry.

Debris Management.—As of March 8, 2018, the Corps has removed approximately 822,000 cubic yards of the estimated 870,000 cubic yards of debris in the U.S. Virgin Islands and 3.54 million cubic yards of the estimated 3.9 million cubic yards of debris in Puerto Rico. In Florida and Georgia, Corps debris subject-matter experts provided technical assistance to counties across Florida and Georgia in response to Hurricane Irma.

Dam and Levee Safety, Assessments, and Response.—In Puerto Rico, Corps Dam and Levee teams inspected 17 priority dam locations and Guajataca Dam was the only site deemed in critical condition. Hurricane Maria caused a significant rise in the water level of the dam, and resulted in flow in the spillway. The spillway structure was compromised and the surrounding area began to erode, posing immediate risk to several thousand residents. Corps teams placed over 500 Jersey barriers and over 1,300 super sand bags to cease any further erosion and allow for long-term repair of the spillway. Additionally, the Corps teams cleared existing outflow conduits and placed piping and pumps to further reduce the water level in the dam to safe levels. Under a FEMA mission assignment, the Corps is in the process of contracting for six additional interim risk reduction measures including grouting spillway slabs and stabilizing intake slopes to reduce risk during Puerto Rico's wet season with a completion date for all of this work in July, 2019. The Corps has no authority for permanent repairs at the project.

Power Restoration Mission.—On September 30, 2017, the Corps was given a FEMA Mission Assignment, within the authority of the Stafford Act, to assist the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA) in further repairing the power system to its pre-storm condition. Our priority is to safely restore reliable power to the people of Puerto Rico as quickly as possible. As of March 8, 2018, 90.7% (1.34 million of 1.47 million) of customer meters are energized. The Corps has over 1,600 contractors working alongside PREPA and mutual aid utility companies to restore power to Puerto Rico. The Corps of Engineers, alongside PREPA and FEMA will continually evaluate the remaining work in order to achieve our goals of restoring electricity to 95% of customers on the island by March 31, 2018. In support of this line of effort, through the Defense Logistics Agency as its contracting agent, the Corps has executed the procurement of over \$204 million of materials required in the restoration the power grid.

The Corps remains fully committed and capable of executing its other Civil Works activities across the Nation despite our heavy involvement in these on-going response and recovery operations. We also remain ready and poised to assist in future events as they may occur. This concludes my testimony and I look forward to answering any questions you might have. Thank you.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you, General.

The Chair now recognizes Mr. Kelly for his statement.

STATEMENT OF JOHN V. KELLY, ACTING INSPECTOR GENERAL, OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. KELLY. Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, and Members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to discuss FEMA's preparedness and response capabilities to the 2017 hurricanes, as well as my office's oversight efforts.

First, I would like to applaud the dedicated women and men who quickly answered the call, rolled up their sleeves and began the difficult work to help the people affected by three major hurricanes. Harvey, Irma, and Maria made landfall within 4 weeks of each other.

According to NOAA, these storms rank as 3 of the 5 most expensive storms in U.S. history, making the 2017 hurricane season the costliest season in U.S. history. This even topped the 2005 season that included Hurricane Katrina.

In response to the unprecedented disasters in Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico, the OIG deployed staff from our local offices as well as other auditors, analysts, and criminal investigators from around the country. OIG staff on the ground creates an independent unit that oversees disaster response and recovery activities, detects and alerts FEMA of systemic problems, helps ensure accountability over Federal funds, and identifies potential risks and vulnerabilities that provide stakeholders with timely information to address operational challenges.

The presence of our criminal investigators ensures stakeholders that DHS and OIG is an integral part of the Department of Justice's zero tolerance policy. Our investigators work in partnership with the Justice's National Center for Disaster Fraud to receive complaints and identify trends. They also actively participate with local task forces established by the U.S. attorneys.

Finally, they brief FEMA and multi-jurisdictional task forces on fraud, waste, and abuse. It is disappointing, but disasters often result in an uptick in fraud.

In fiscal year 2017, we received more than 4,800 FEMA-related hotline complaints. In the first 5 months of fiscal year 2018, we received over 14,600 hotline complaints. That is more than triple the total amount we received in 2017.

From these complaints we initiated already 220 investigations of Hurricane Harvey, Irma, and Maria issues. These numbers continue to grow every day.

For the 2017 hurricane season, FEMA faced both situational challenges caused by the magnitude of the disasters and systemic challenges that have persisted over time. Responding to three major hurricanes at one time is difficult.

In 2017, the response was further complicated by Hurricanes Irma and Maria devastating the Caribbean islands of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, which are remote and not easily accessible locations. This poses additional logistical challenges to an already taxed response work force.

To further complicate matter, much of the infrastructure was already in disrepair prior to the damages caused by the hurricanes.

In addition to the situation challenges, FEMA faces persistent systemic vulnerabilities such as improper procurement practices,

duplication of benefits, inadequate staffing, grant management issues, privacy vulnerabilities, protecting survivors' home and property from further damages, and providing funds to high-risk entities.

If left unmitigated, these challenges could delay survivor recovery and put billions of Federal dollars at risk.

To this end, we have issued several lesson-learned reports addressing FEMA's disaster preparedness and response to recovery efforts. This work highlights on-going concerns that FEMA must address to ensure it effectively meets its mission and improves efficiency and effectiveness of program operations.

Looking forward, the challenges identified during the recent disasters highlight the importance of proactive and thorough oversight, as well as continuing improvement of FEMA in executing its mission. As agents of positive change, we have over 30 on-going and planned reviews and strive to make recommendations that improve FEMA's efficiency and effectiveness, positively affect disaster survivors, and safeguard public funds.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my oral statement. I welcome any questions you or Members may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Kelly follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOHN V. KELLY

MARCH 15, 2018

Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, and Members of the committee, thank you for inviting me here to discuss lessons learned from the 2017 disasters. I am pleased to have the opportunity to share our office's oversight efforts in response to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria.

We applaud the dedicated women and men of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) who quickly answered the call, rolled up their sleeves, and began the difficult and critical work to help the people of Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Georgia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and elsewhere.

For our office, the first order of business in response to the unprecedented disasters was to deploy auditors and investigators to FEMA's Joint Field Offices (JFOs) in Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico. We quickly deployed staff from our local field offices as well as other auditors, analysts, and criminal investigators from around the country. Having OIG staff on the ground serves multiple purposes: We serve as an independent unit for oversight of disaster response and recovery activities, to detect and alert FEMA of systemic problems, and to help ensure accountability over Federal funds. Our deployment activities are focused on identifying potential risks and vulnerabilities and providing our stakeholders with timely, useful information to address emerging challenges and on-going operations.¹

Additionally, the presence of our criminal investigators at the JFOs serves to assure stakeholders that the OIG is an integral part of the Department of Justice's (DOJ) position that it intends a "zero tolerance" policy with respect to disaster-related fraud and other crimes. They work in partnership with the DOJ-led National Center for Disaster Fraud to receive complaints regarding fraud and other illegal activity and identify trends and systemic issues. Our investigators are also actively participating on the local Disaster Fraud Task Forces established by the U.S. Attorney's Offices in the affected areas. Finally, we brief FEMA management and multi-jurisdictional taskforces on fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement issues unique to the disaster recovery process.

¹As the committee is aware, our office recently recalled and removed from our website 12 reports that resulted from prior early deployment activities. This action was taken in an abundance of caution after an internal review revealed that the reports may not have adequately answered objectives and, in some cases, may have lacked sufficient and appropriate evidence to support their conclusions. We understand that you may have concerns about this action, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

We plan to continue these efforts—and others that I describe below—throughout the year as FEMA addresses the situational challenges brought on by the 2017 hurricane season, as well as systemic challenges that have persisted over time.

THE 2017 HURRICANE SEASON: UNIQUE AND UNPRECEDENTED

Three major hurricanes—Harvey, Irma, and Maria—made landfall in a 4-week time period during August and September 2017. These storms now rank as three of the five most expensive in U.S. history, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).² This makes the 2017 hurricane season the costliest in U.S. history, topping even the 2005 season, which included Katrina, Rita, and Wilma. According to NOAA statistics, each of the 2017 storms was record-breaking in its own right:

- Hurricane Harvey produced 60.58 inches of rainfall in Texas, the most ever recorded in the continental United States from a tropical cyclone;
- Hurricane Irma was the strongest storm on record to exist in the Atlantic Ocean outside the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean; and
- Hurricane Maria was the strongest hurricane to make landfall in Puerto Rico since 1928.³

This confluence of events brought with it unique situational challenges.

One of the chief challenges in a post-disaster environment is the vulnerability for fraud and abuse. Unfortunately, there are those that wish to profit from disasters, turning survivors into victims. Our office works closely with the National Center for Disaster Fraud Hotline as we receive and process complaints. In fiscal year 2017, we received more than 4,800 FEMA-related complaints to the OIG Hotline. In the first 5 months of fiscal year 2018 alone, we received more than triple the amount of FEMA-related complaints—over 14,600. During this time period, Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria combined produced almost 13,400 complaints that resulted in 220 initiated investigations. These numbers continue to increase each day.

In addition to our permanent office in Puerto Rico, we have temporarily assigned additional special agents to both Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and we have been in frequent contact with prosecutors and the U.S. Virgin Islands Inspector General in these areas to coordinate investigative activities related to:

- contract, procurement, and grant fraud;
- disaster applicant benefit fraud;
- identity theft;
- impersonation of FEMA or Federal law enforcement officials; and
- employee misconduct.

We have activated or leveraged various resources aimed at combatting criminality in these areas. For example, our Major Frauds and Corruption Unit has developed a robust capability to investigate complex financial crimes. This multidisciplinary team of experts—special agents, forensic auditors, and financial analysts—work together to proactively identify DHS-related fraud. In the aftermath of the 2017 disasters, this team interfaced with FEMA officials from Office of the Chief Security Officer, Office of the Chief Procurement Officer, Grant Programs Directorate, Office of Response and Recovery, and Office of Chief Counsel to pursue criminal investigations of FEMA benefit and related fraud, identify fraud victims, and assess the effectiveness of FEMA efforts in the hurricane-impacted areas. In furtherance of our mission to support the Department and FEMA by identifying waste, fraud, and abuse, we aggressively investigate potential criminal allegations. Whenever possible, we immediately alert FEMA officials when we identify programmatic issues or vulnerabilities that may adversely affect the effective execution of their mission.

As an additional example, we have developed in-house expertise in digital forensics and analysis. These specially-trained special agents, digital forensic analysts, and intelligence analysts work to identify, acquire, and analyze digital evidence in furtherance of our investigations. This group leverages large datasets from Government, commercial, and open-source repositories to uncover fraud, waste, and abuse in disaster assistance programs.

PERSISTENT CHALLENGES IN DISASTER RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

In addition to the situational challenges facing FEMA during the 2017 hurricane season, other challenges to FEMA's programs and operations tend to be more persistent and systemic vulnerabilities:

- improper procurement practices;

² Damages from Harvey are estimated at \$125 billion; Maria's damages are estimated at \$90 billion; and Irma's at \$50 billion.

³<https://coast.noaa.gov/states/fast-facts/weather-disasters.html>.

- duplication of benefits;
- mismanagement of disaster costs;
- privacy vulnerabilities;
- limitations in the ability to quickly protect survivors' homes and property from further damage;
- obstacles with accurate and timely home inspections;
- incomplete controls when providing Federal funds to high-risk entities; and
- inconsistent contract oversight.

Unmitigated, these challenges could delay survivors' recovery and put billions of dollars of Federal funds at risk. Thus, we have identified numerous observations and concerns and issued several lessons learned reports concerning FEMA's disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. This work highlights on-going concerns FEMA must address to ensure it effectively meets its mission and improves the efficiency and effectiveness of its programs and operations.⁴

FEMA Faces Significant Challenges Overseeing the Procurement and Contracting of Federal Grantees

As we noted in our recent report *Lessons Learned from Prior Reports on Disaster-related Procurement and Contracting*,⁵ FEMA faces significant challenges in ensuring its grant recipients properly manage FEMA disaster funds. FEMA is continually challenged in its oversight of procurement and contracting practices—namely, ensuring disaster grant recipients and subrecipients understand and comply with Federal regulations and FEMA guidelines.

Throughout the course of our work during fiscal year 2015 through June 2017, we identified (and questioned) more than \$256 million in ineligible contract costs because subrecipients did not follow Federal procurement regulations.

These procurement-related deficiencies include:

- Failure to provide full and open competition, resulting in FEMA having limited assurance that incurred costs were reasonable, as well as an increased risk for fraud, waste, and abuse.
- Failure to take all affirmative steps to assure the use of disadvantaged businesses when possible, resulting in small and minority firms, women's business enterprises, and labor surplus area firms not always having sufficient opportunities to bid on Federally-funded work.
- Failure to include all required contract provisions, resulting in an increased risk of misinterpretations, errors in pricing, scopes of work, and contract disputes.
- Failure to verify whether contractors were suspended, debarred, or otherwise excluded or ineligible, resulting in lack of protection of U.S. taxpayers from potential financial risks posed by such contractors.

Procurement practices that do not comply with Federal requirements can lead to high-risk contracts that can result in U.S. taxpayers bearing excessive and ineligible costs. Lack of compliance also increases the risk of favoritism, collusion, fraud, waste, and abuse. Furthermore, we identified more than \$191 million in ineligible costs that subrecipients may have incurred had we not identified the procurement problems before FEMA-obligated disaster assistance grant funds.⁶

FEMA Challenges in Ensuring Grantees Manage Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation Project Costs Properly

About 153,000 recipients and subrecipients of FEMA disaster assistance grants are currently working on more than 650,000 open projects worth over \$68 billion—not including the majority of those related to the 2017 hurricanes. As our office has reported over the years, FEMA faces persistent challenges in ensuring that grant recipients properly manage disaster funds. We described many of these challenges in a letter to the Senate Committee on Homeland Security last year, and offered possible legislative changes at the Committee's invitation.⁷ We have attached this letter to our testimony today.

⁴ We plan to translate relevant reports to Spanish for State and local stakeholders in Puerto Rico.

⁵ *Lessons Learned from Prior Reports on Disaster-related Procurement and Contracting* (OIG-18-29).

⁶ *Lessons Learned from Prior Reports on Disaster-related Procurement and Contracting* (OIG-18-29).

⁷ Letter from Inspector General John Roth to Chairman Johnson, Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, dated June 2, 2017 (attached).

We most recently raised these issues to FEMA in a Management Alert issued in December 2017.⁸ The majority of our disaster grant audits focus on grants funded by the Disaster Relief Fund under FEMA's Public Assistance grant program and Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Each year, our reports identify issues with the management of millions of dollars in Federal funds allocated for disaster assistance and recovery efforts. From fiscal year 2009 to 2017, our reports provided more than 1,400 recommendations to disallow unsupported and ineligible costs, put funds to better use, and improve grant management oversight of disaster funds. We concluded these issues continue, in part, because FEMA does not adequately manage disaster funds or hold grant recipients accountable for properly managing disaster funds.

Additionally, over the last 6 years, DHS's Independent Auditors identified multiple internal control weaknesses related to FEMA's grant management, such as:

- not maintaining central oversight over its regional offices; ineffectively communicating policies and procedures with its regional offices; and lacking effective policies and procedures related to grant management;
- not ensuring recipients comply with Single Audit Act requirements;
- not effectively reconciling grantee (recipient) quarterly performance reports to FEMA's systems; and
- not consistently implementing effective controls to ensure the timely closeout of FEMA's grants.

DHS's Independent Auditors also reported that FEMA did not implement effective monitoring procedures over its grant activities from fiscal years 2011 to 2016.⁹ These findings reveal that FEMA was aware of its grant management issues yet did not take effective actions to strengthen its internal controls.

In order to assist disaster assistance recipients and subrecipients to properly manage their grant funds, in late September 2017, we issued an updated version of our *Audit Tips for Managing Disaster-Related Project Costs*.⁹ This report provides an overview of OIG responsibilities; roles of FEMA, recipients, and subrecipients; applicable disaster assistance Federal statutes, regulations, and guidelines; the audit process and frequent audit findings; and tips for managing project costs.

This report should assist disaster assistance recipients and subrecipients to:

- document and account for disaster-related costs;
- minimize the loss of FEMA disaster assistance funds;
- maximize financial recovery; and
- prevent fraud, waste, and abuse of disaster funds.

Aside from its availability on-line, we frequently distribute this report to FEMA, State, and grant recipient and subrecipient stakeholders, and will continue to do so during our on-going fieldwork in the disaster-damaged areas in which we are active.

Housing Challenges

In September 2017, we issued a Management Alert urging FEMA to develop adequate controls to ensure Direct Housing Assistance (DHA) funds are spent according to Federal regulations.

When FEMA began using this program during Hurricane Sandy, we raised concerns about the need to: (1) Maintain strong internal controls given the number of individuals affected by the hurricane; and (2) address vulnerabilities associated with implementing pilot programs. In a more recent report, we found that FEMA had still not instituted adequate policies, procedures and, internal controls to prevent waste, fraud, and program mismanagement. Furthermore, because FEMA has not yet developed policies and procedures to provide regions with a framework to follow, FEMA and regional staff at JFOs had to develop and implement housing assistance on a disaster-by-disaster basis.¹¹

⁸ *Management Alert—FEMA Faces Significant Challenges Ensuring Recipients Properly Manage Disaster Funds* (OIG-18-33).

⁹ *Independent Auditors' Report on DHS's Fiscal Year 2011 Financial Statements and Internal Control over Financial Reporting* (OIG-12-07); *Independent Auditors' Report on DHS's Fiscal Year 2012 Financial Statements and Internal Control over Financial Reporting* (OIG-13-20); *Independent Auditors' Report on DHS's Fiscal Year 2018 Financial Statements and Internal Control over Financial Reporting* (OIG-14-18); *Independent Auditors' Report on DHS's Fiscal Year 2014 Financial Statements and Internal Control over Financial Reporting* (OIG-15-10); *Independent Auditors' Report on DHS's Fiscal Year 2015 Financial Statements and Internal Control over Financial Reporting* (OIG-16-06); and *Independent Auditors' Report on DHS's Fiscal Year 2016 Financial Statements and Internal Control over Financial Reporting* (OIG-17-12).

¹⁰ *Audit Tips for Managing Disaster-Related Project Costs* (OIG-17-120-D).

¹¹ *Management Alert—Observations and Concerns with FEMA's Housing Assistance Program Efforts for Hurricane Harvey in Texas* (OIG-17-121-MA).

After Hurricane Harvey, we learned that FEMA planned to enter into an Inter-governmental Service Agreement with the State of Texas General Land Office (Texas) to provide assistance to FEMA in the delivery of DHA funds to Hurricane Harvey survivors. We observed that FEMA's agreement with Texas did not clearly define FEMA's and Texas' responsibilities for monitoring and overseeing the DHA program. Thus, we felt compelled to remind FEMA about our previous concerns and re-emphasize the importance in ensuring DHA funds are spent according to Federal regulations.

Specifically, we raised concerns that the agreement lacked adequate controls that could lead to non-compliance with Federal procurement standards resulting in a high-risk contract that can lead to excessive and ineligible costs ultimately born by the U.S. taxpayer. Due to risk involved, this program requires increased vigilance to monitor the procurement of direct housing assistance services.

This program is high-risk and requires increased vigilance in order to monitor the procurement of direct housing assistance services. We also noted that if FEMA planned to use a similar plan in the future, it should put in place policies and procedures to ensure that the State has the capabilities and expertise to manage and oversee the program. Finally, we also noted that if FEMA and Texas do not provide timely and adequate oversight, significant amounts of Federal funding could be at risk of fraud, waste, and abuse.

As a result of our concerns, we are currently reviewing FEMA and Texas' Inter-governmental Service Agreement for direct housing. We are also reviewing temporary housing delays in Texas under the Partial Repair and Essential Power for Sheltering (PREPS) program.

Staffing Challenges

In 2016, our office reported on FEMA's disaster incident workforce, finding that despite hiring initiatives, the workforce was significantly understaffed.¹² We reported that since the staffing problems FEMA encountered after Hurricane Katrina, FEMA continues to experience challenges hiring enough disaster workforce employees and deploying Reservists in their FEMA Qualification System (FQS) position with sufficient knowledge and skills to assist disaster survivors effectively. Strong Reservist performance is critical to the Nation's ability to respond to major disasters because Reservists make up about half of FEMA's disaster incident workforce, a workforce that remains far below the number necessary to respond effectively to the next catastrophic disaster.

In 2012, FEMA transitioned its on-call workforce from Disaster Assistance Employees to Reservists. Since then, FEMA officials have expressed their frustration regarding the performance of Reservists deployed to disasters under their new FEMA Qualification System positions. Despite recent hiring initiatives, FEMA's disaster incident workforce remains significantly understaffed, and some Reservists continue to deploy to disasters without the knowledge, skills, and training they need to assist survivors effectively.

We made four recommendations to FEMA intended to improve the knowledge, skills, performance, and morale of FEMA's Reservist workforce. One of those recommendations has been closed and three remain open. We plan additional work in this area going forward.

Challenges Related to Insurance under the Public Assistance Program

In November 2017, we issued a special report on lessons learned from our previous work related to insurance under the Public Assistance grant program.¹³ The goal of this report was to address challenges FEMA, Texas, Florida, Georgia, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, and California may face managing insurance under the FEMA Public Assistance program in the wake of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, and the October 2017 California wildfires. Our report noted that if FEMA does not address the recurring issues we identified in 37 previous reports issued between fiscal years 2013 and 2017, it will be at risk of violating the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act and exposing billions of taxpayer dollars to fraud, waste, or mismanagement. The major recurring challenges we identified include:

- duplicate benefits in which subrecipients claimed FEMA reimbursement for costs that were covered by insurance;

¹²FEMA Can Enhance Readiness with Management of Its Disaster Incident Workforce (OIG-16-127-D).

¹³Special Report: Lessons Learned from Previous Audit Reports on Insurance under the Public Assistance Program (OIG-18-12).

- insufficient insurance in which subrecipients did not obtain and maintain sufficient insurance coverage required as a condition for receiving Federal disaster assistance; and
- misapplied or misallocated insurance proceeds in which subrecipients received insurance proceeds, and misapplied or did not allocate those proceeds to FEMA projects.

The reports included 40 recommendations for FEMA to address deficiencies or errors, totaling more than \$322 million in questioned costs. It is incumbent upon FEMA to take appropriate action on Public Assistance program issues related to insurance because FEMA will likely face similar challenges pertaining to insurance related to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria.

Concerns with Potential Duplicate or Ineligible FEMA Public Assistance Funding for Facilities Damaged by Back-to-Back Disasters

During the 2017 disasters' time frame, we reported to FEMA the critical importance of implementing effective controls to minimize the risk of funding duplicate or ineligible repair costs of facilities damaged by back-to-back incidents.¹⁴

Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria—some of the most catastrophic disasters in recent United States history—resulted in multiple disaster declarations and billions of dollars in damages to areas within several Gulf Coast and Southeast States, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. We noted many of the same designated disaster areas for Hurricanes Harvey and Irma overlapped disaster areas from 13 disaster incidents in 2016 and 2017. As a result, many of the same facilities damaged by an earlier incident may have also received damage under Hurricanes Harvey or Irma before repairs to the facility were completed.

As of March 8, 2018, FEMA obligated an estimated \$413 million of Public Assistance funding to cover permanent repair or replacement costs to facilities damaged under the 13 previous disaster declarations. To avoid obligating duplicate or ineligible repair costs to an affected facility, FEMA will need to discern which incident caused damages to the facility and whether repairs necessitated by the previous incident were complete.

FEMA must implement effective controls to minimize this risk of funding duplicate or ineligible repair costs of facilities damaged by back-to-back incidents.

LOOKING FORWARD: OUR WORK AHEAD

The challenges identified during the recent disasters highlight the importance of proactive and thorough oversight, as well as continual improvement of the ways by which FEMA executes its mission. As agents of positive change, we strive to identify recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of FEMA's work; effect improvements for disaster survivors; and safeguard public funds from fraud, waste, and abuse.

Our investigations have already yielded results, uncovering serious schemes aimed at defrauding FEMA and turning disaster survivors into victims—something we are working diligently to prevent. For example:

- We are investigating a wide-spread identity-theft ring in which numerous individuals used the stolen identities of hurricane victims to fraudulently apply for benefits, thereby defrauding FEMA and victimizing hurricane survivors.
- We have arrested an individual—in coordination with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement operatives—for False Impersonation of a Federal Officer or Employee. This individual attempted to procure work at an Emergency Management Center as a voluntary staff member for Hurricane Maria relief efforts. At the time of the arrest, the individual was wearing a Homeland Security Investigations Special Agent t-shirt, a DHS cap, and had a fake DHS badge in his possession. Our agents obtained consent to search the person's residence where they found additional t-shirts with Homeland Security Investigations logos.

We will continue to review and triage the many complaints and allegations that we receive each day and judiciously expend our limited investigative resources on those matters that pose the greatest threats or risks to FEMA programs and operations. And we will do so in close and timely coordination with our investigative partners, FEMA, and our oversight community. Our intent is clear: To protect disaster survivors and the billions of taxpayer dollars entrusted to the critical efforts of disaster response and recovery.

¹⁴ *Management Alert—Concerns with Potential Duplicate or Ineligible FEMA Public Assistance Funding for Facilities Damaged by Back-to-Back Disasters* (OIG-18-14).

On the audit side of our house, we are planning, or have begun, a variety of reviews both at the Federal and local disaster level, intended to improve FEMA's programs and operations.

First, we plan to start several capacity audits in Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico during this fiscal year. Capacity audits and early warning audits identify areas where FEMA public assistance grant recipients and subrecipients may need additional technical assistance or monitoring to ensure compliance with Federal requirements. In addition, by undergoing an audit early in the grant cycle, grant recipients and subrecipients have the opportunity to correct noncompliance before they spend the majority of their grant funding. It also allows them the opportunity to supplement deficient documentation or locate missing records before too much time elapses.

Additionally, at the Federal level, our work includes audits in the areas of:

- FEMA's fraud prevention efforts under the Individuals and Households Program;
- FEMA's Transitional Shelter Assistance (TSA) Program;
- FEMA's management and oversight of housing inspections; and
- FEMA pre-positioned contracts.

In Texas, we have work under way and planned including:

- a review of FEMA and Texas' Intergovernmental Service Agreement for housing;
- a review of the Sheltering and Temporary Essential Power (STEP) Pilot Program, called Partial Repair and Essential Power for Sheltering (PREPS) in Texas;
- procurement capacity reviews of selected subgrantees;
- lessons learned report on repair or replacement (50 percent rule); and
- lessons learned report on Direct Administrative Costs.

In Florida, our planned and on-going work includes:

- the implementation of the STEP program;
- the use of the new Public Assistance service delivery model;
- FEMA's guidance to affected municipalities on private property debris removal;
- the use of direct leasing to shelter survivors;
- duplication of Federal benefits (in coordination with HUD OIG);
- FEMA's automotive assistance, and
- mission assignments for vessel removal and private property debris removal.

In Puerto Rico, we have work under way and planned, including:

- challenges with providing Puerto Rico disaster survivors roof coverings to reduce further damage to their homes and property;
- review of disaster-related contracting including the contracts with Whitefish Energy, Cobra Acquisitions, Bronze Star LLC (blue tarps), and Tribute Contracting LLC (meals), among others;
- additional controls for Puerto Rico's high-risk grant applicants;
- FEMA's Sheltering and Temporary Essential Power (STEP) Program;
- FEMA's preparedness, management, and distribution of supplies;
- lessons learned from repair versus replacement funding decisions; and
- FEMA's plan to use alternative procedures for the Public Assistance Program;
- debris removal operations;
- police overtime pay;
- Federal considerations relating to the privatization of PREPA;
- duplication of Federal benefits (in coordination with HUD OIG); and
- key infrastructure repair costs (such as for the Guajataca Dam).

In the U.S. Virgin Islands, we plan to review several areas including:

- FEMA's Sheltering and Temporary Essential Power (STEP) Program;
- mission assignment for sunken vessel removal;
- mission assignment for medical waste disposal;
- off-island debris disposal activities;
- billing and payment processes for FEMA-contracted local lodging; and
- capacity audits of FEMA grant recipients and subrecipients.

In addition to these on-going and planned reviews, we will continue to work with FEMA, its partners, and our oversight community to help ensure challenges are timely identified and addressed.

CONCLUSION

It is incumbent upon the OIG and FEMA to work collaboratively to highlight risks, identify control weaknesses, and devise ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of FEMA's programs and operations, while simultaneously mitigating fraud, waste, and abuse. The recovery of countless survivors, as well as the account-

ability of billions of dollars in public funds depends upon our collaboration. We will continue to approach our work with a sense of dedication and urgency, and will keep Congress fully informed of our findings and recommendations, consistent with our obligations under the *Inspector General Act of 1978*.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony.

I am pleased to answer your questions, as well as those of the other Members. Thank you.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you, Mr. Kelly.

I now recognize myself for questions.

Administrator, first, let me commend you for your emergency response efforts in my home State of Texas. Katy High School turned into a forward operating base with the National Guard active duty. We saw the Coast Guard. We saw private citizens, the Cajun Navy, and FEMA was there to pre-position assets after the President declared it an emergency.

I think that made a big difference.

But I think there is some also confusion about the role of FEMA versus the role that the State and locals have to play as well, working as a team together in the recovery efforts. I did speak with my Governor, Governor Abbott recently, who one of his frustrations was he had to deal with so many different organizations.

I know we have talked about this. What is your vision to possibly streamline and make more efficient the FEMA process in these disasters?

Mr. LONG. Thank you for the question. So first of all, I would like to acknowledge that Governor Abbott is one of the most bold Governors who has truly owned every bit of the disaster response and recovery, and that is the way it should work. I believe that Texas is a model.

I say that because it truly is where we need to go as Federally-supported, State-managed, locally-executed. FEMA is not a first responder. FEMA should not be the primary and only responder. My job is to work directly with Governors to understand what the response and recovery goals or the preparedness goals, mitigation goals, are, organize our resources to help that Governor achieve those goals.

In Texas I do believe that that is the model that was played out, and that is the model we should be seeking for. The problem particularly is what is complex is housing. As I said, I would like to lay out a new vision for housing but it would require granting authorities being given to me to help, you know, from the Congress, to reorganize it.

For example, we are not housing experts. We are literally good at doing emergency housing provisions. We are good at sheltering. We are good at blue tarp missions with the Army Corps of Engineers. We are good at transitional shelter authority. We put nearly 4.7 million people in hotels or overnight—no, excuse me—4.7 million nights in hotels has been coordinated to this point.

It would take a person over I think 12,000 years to stay in hotels that many nights. Let us identify what we are good at. Give the Governors more granting authority to handle the difficult housing issues and then clearly design the hand-off between FEMA and the partnering agencies.

Streamline what we are all responsible for, how we should work together, and in some cases the disaster survivor may get up to 15

knocks at the door from FEMA to other Federal Government agencies, from State governments to non-governmental organizations, and it is confusing.

We have to do one inspection that cuts across the Federal Government perspective and down through the agencies. We have to streamline what we are doing.

Chairman MCCAUL. Yes, I think that is absolutely right. One-stop shop, and I look forward to working with you on legislation and granting authority for you as well.

Major General, this is a map that Army Corps, and you have probably seen this. I have talked about it a lot. They did this in 1940, and it created the Barker Addicks dam. But Cypress Creek there is a proposed levee system that was never built.

So what happened in Hurricane Harvey was that Cypress Creek overflowed, went into Barker and Addicks reservoir, then a controlled spillage was done at about 1:30 in the morning and those residents downstream were not very happy about that. It filled up the bayous and then it flooded downtown Houston. So it had sort of a cascading effect here.

This gets more into flood mitigation. I think, you know, you always hear an ounce of—the prevention piece is so important. Can you tell me whether the Cypress Creek reservoir, the third reservoir, is on your list of projects?

General JACKSON. Congressman, thanks. I can see from here even without my glasses that is a 1940's plan, and I think you will agree that a lot has changed in the hydrology of the region upstream and downstream since 1940, a lot of development, which increases significantly the runoff.

To answer your question, though, we have a number of projects that we have identified that we are going to try to put forth to the administration for funding in the supplemental that Congress passed to be able to take a look at that reservoir, other opportunities to improve the flood protection—

Chairman MCCAUL. If I could just take—my time is getting ready—and if I could just say it is the Governor's No. 1 priority. He told me that and it is also my No. 1 priority is to get that Cypress reservoir built and reinforce Barker Addicks to make sure this doesn't happen again. Fifty inches of rain is a lot of rain.

We also put language in the supplemental for \$90 billion to expedite some of these projects, so I would hope you would be able to do this as quickly as possible. I think one of the concerns we always have with the Army Corps is it takes too long, the studies and the actual construction.

I think that is something that Congress has given you new authorities to do it more expeditiously. I look forward to working with you to get this done as quickly as possible because it has flooded three times in 2 years. It really, you know, again, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. We need to get this thing done.

So with that, I now recognize the Ranking Member.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Administrator, you talked about some improvements that you hope to see in FEMA going forward. Would you share those written improvements with this committee?

Mr. LONG. Yes, sir, absolutely.

Mr. THOMPSON. Are they completed at this time?

Mr. LONG. Yes, so what we tried to do is I believe in streamlined and concise documents. Basically this is an outline of the entire strategic plan on one page that outlines our goals and objectives.

Mr. THOMPSON. I think they are good. So is your testimony also that you have all the money you need to do your job?

Mr. LONG. Can I get back to you on that? I do. I am very thankful for the supplementals that went forward. I do have a concern that with the magnitude of this event I have the ability in FEMA to reimburse everybody but myself. One of the problems that I think we are running into within the agency is that the operational budget and staffing pattern, as Mr. Kelly alluded to, doesn't grow with the disaster response.

So the amount of paperwork, the requests that come into the agency is exponentially increased with a year like this, but the staffing pattern internally to my agency stays the same.

Mr. THOMPSON. So that means you won't get back with me?

Mr. LONG. Yes, sir, I would be happy to respond to you in writing. Thank you.

Mr. THOMPSON. You got a time frame on that, on your response?

Mr. LONG. Can I have 2 weeks, sir?

Mr. THOMPSON. You have it.

Mr. LONG. Thank you.

Mr. THOMPSON. Is it also your testimony that the response to Florida, Texas, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands was acceptable under FEMA's present standards?

Mr. LONG. Well, I think the term acceptable lies in the eye of the beholder. You know, I am sure that there are people that feel that FEMA slighted them out in the field and didn't give them the assistance that they deserved.

It is very tough to deal with each and every community, but as a whole, as I said, I am very proud of the response that was put forward and the model of Federally-supported, State-managed, and locally-executed played out in California, Texas, and Florida.

In regards to Puerto Rico, we are still pushing forward every day. I believe we still have 3,000 staff in place along with the local hires that are there. In regards to things like food and commodity, the amount of commodities that we put into Puerto Rico is—one of the estimates I saw was close to \$2 billion. That alone would rank as one of our top 20 most costly disasters in the—

Mr. THOMPSON. I—

Mr. LONG [continuing]. In the history of FEMA.

Mr. THOMPSON. I thank you for that, but I am trying to get Brock Long's opinion as to whether or not you are confident that the response to Texas, Florida, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico was acceptable to your standards. I am not talking about anybody else.

Mr. LONG. I would say yes it was acceptable, but do we have room for improvement? Always. Always. Yes.

Mr. THOMPSON. What room for improvements would you ask for?

Mr. LONG. Well, here again, improvement is not just my agency. It is the emergency management profession as a whole. What I mean by that is, as I said, catastrophic readiness bothers me from a low- to no-notice standpoint of do all counties, do States, have

their own ability to push water, ice, MREs, and life-saving commodities?

Have they actually written disaster cost recovery plans that will help them understand how to receive funding from 17 different agencies and their outcome-driven, you know, when it comes? Do they know how they are going to mitigate their communities when these dollars arrive? And they know what their goals are going to be?

You know, are we pre-planning up front at all levels of government and doing it in an integrated fashion to where we are pushing forward to do the greatest good with the taxpaying dollars?

Mr. THOMPSON. So can you get this committee in writing what you consider the acceptable consequences for the response to those four disasters?

Mr. LONG. Sure, yes, sir.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you.

Now, Administrator Long, I understand that the Trump administration is requiring Puerto Rico to use public assistance alternative procedures on a permanent work projects as a condition of receiving public assistance grants. Why is Puerto Rico being treated differently than other areas?

Mr. LONG. We are not treating Puerto Rico differently. In everything that we have done with Governor Rossello—we have been playing phone tag this morning and as of yesterday as well—is everything is negotiated. We believe that the Section 428 in the Stafford Act is the most prudent way to move forward. We briefed the Governors, and ultimately he requested that.

We don't strong-arm people into doing things by any means. That is not the way I want to conduct business. The reason we went with 428 is because of the sheer magnitude of the amount of damage to the infrastructure and the deferred maintenance problems that we ran into.

For example, there were thousands of roadway obstructions. It would be too cumbersome, it would be too costly for FEMA to write a project worksheet for each one of those obstructions that could be reversioned and reversioned time and time again and then FEMA ends up being there for 20 years. A 428 program—

Mr. THOMPSON. I am reclaiming my time.

Mr. Chair, I would like to have your response to that specific question in writing back to the committee?

Mr. LONG. Yes, sir.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you.

I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Ranking Member yields back.

Per the agreement with the Ranking Member's U.C. request, I now recognize Ms. Velázquez for an opening statement.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you Ranking Member Thompson for the opportunity to speak here today. I also want to recognize you both for your leadership in examining the aftermath of last year's unprecedented hurricane season.

This work is critical because our disaster response capabilities must continually evolve to meet the types and frequencies of the disasters that we face. While much has been debated about the

Federal Government's response to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, I am here today to find solutions.

I am worry about the emotional toll that this unprecedented hurricanes have taken upon the people of Puerto Rico. I am here today because the people in Puerto Rico are losing hope. More than 300,000 have left the island.

I am here because I am worried that before we know it, hurricane season will be before us again. The truth is before the hurricanes made landfall it was widely known that if a natural disaster, especially one of catastrophic proportions were to hit the island, the most vulnerable asset was Puerto Rico's energy grid. As everyone in this room knows, this turned out to be the case.

So months after the hurricanes some areas still look as they were hit yesterday. I was in my hometown of Yabucoa 2 weeks ago where Maria made landfall. It looks like the hurricane struck yesterday. They still desperately need our help.

So today, as we near the half-year, I want to say to you, Mr. Chairman, we are all keenly aware of what is at stake come June when hurricane season starts again.

As we hear from FEMA, the Army Corps, DHS and local officials, I want to make sure that we all coalesce leaving behind our political inclinations and we work to come up with a meaningful plan for future disasters, one that would allow us to proactively deploy Federal resources and prevent the mistakes of the past.

Mr. Long, we all knew Hurricane Irma, Category 5, was in its track to hit Puerto Rico and we all knew how vulnerable Puerto Rico was in terms of the power grid.

What steps proactively, knowing what we knew then, we need to take in order to be quickly there to deploy the Federal assets that we need, not to wait 2 weeks later to send the Comfort when we knew that no hospital in Puerto Rico will have electricity?

The people in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Texas, Florida, California, and frankly all those subject to the wrath of climate change destruction need to have the full faith and confidence in the institutions meant to keep America safe.

I look forward to hearing about what has worked so far and what gaps this committee can address moving forward.

Thank you again for allowing me to participate today, and I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentlelady yields back.

I now recognize Delegate Plaskett for an opening statement.

Ms. PLASKETT. Thank you very much. It is not coming on. There it is. Thank you. Thank you, Chairman McCaul and Ranking Member Thompson for the opportunity to say a few words before the committee for this hearing on preparedness, response, and rebuilding.

As we all know now, Hurricanes Irma and Maria caused dozens of injuries and some deaths in my district, the U.S. Virgin Islands. The damage from the storms, the psychological and long-term economic impact is unparalleled as the occurrence of two Category 5 hurricanes making landfall in a specific area over a span of 2 weeks.

Recovery is far from over and the rebuilding has yet to begin. The catastrophic destruction caused by the hurricanes continue to

demand massive amounts of aid to address the overwhelming needs of the victims, who very much remain faced with the daunting task of rebuilding their lives.

I will give you a couple of examples of where this is quite evident. It has been found that approximately 19,000 homes have been damaged. However, the Army Corps installed 3,658 blue roofs. It became a long negotiation with FEMA for approval in spending for the sheltered restoration and essential power program, the STEP program.

The Federal Government's ingenious alternative to temporary housing to get people back in their homes rather putting them in temporary shelters long-term. This rapid repair program, as it is called, was announced later February. That would be September is the hurricane, February, 6 months after the storms, and homeowners are still awaiting inspection and approvals.

The next hurricane season begins June 1. Mounds of hurricane debris, a second example being including appliances and scrap metal are disposed near public schools and pose real health and safety risks to the people. Debris removal on St. Thomas and St. John was managed by the Army Corps of Engineers.

On St. Croix, three times the size of St. Thomas, debris collection was run by the local government. Debris was collected three times faster on St. Croix as it was on St. Thomas. You heard testimony here this morning that they are going to be picking up that debris for removal from the islands this week.

That is for islands that are on St. Thomas, 32 square miles and 84 square miles of space on St. Croix—6 months for debris removal. As of today, the period of the 100 percent Federal cost share for debris removal and emergency protective measures has ended although Congress has requested an extension from FEMA.

I would ask unanimous consent to submit for the record a letter written by the Governor of the Virgin Islands on February 14, 2018 requesting an extension of debris removal, 100 percent Federal cost share and a March 13 letter from Ranking Member Peter DeFazio of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and your own Ranking Member, Ranking Member Bennie Thompson on the Committee on Homeland Security, requesting of the President that this extension be granted.

Chairman MCCAUL. Without objection, so ordered.
[The information follows:]

LETTER FROM KENNETH E. MAPP, GOVERNOR, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

FEBRUARY 14, 2018.

The Honorable DONALD J. TRUMP,
President of the United States, The White House, Washington, DC 20500.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: Greetings to you from the grateful people of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

On behalf of the tens of thousands of our families who continue to benefit from the federal assistance and support that you have authorized, I sincerely thank you. The federal team here in the Territory remains extremely collaborative and is working very hard alongside my team every day as we continue to make tremendous progress in our recovery from the historic devastation caused by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

I am writing today to respectfully request that you extend the period of 100% federal funding for FEMA Public Assistance Program Emergency Work. Specifically, I am appealing to you to extend the time-period by 120-days for Category A, including Direct Federal Assistance related to Debris Removal activities and 180-days for Cat-

egory B, including Direct Federal Assistance related to Emergency Protective Measures.

While we are extremely appreciative that you initially allowed us a 180-day period for 100% cost share, despite our best collective efforts, we are not physically going to be able to finish all of these projects by the March 15th deadline—and simply do not have the financial resources available to cover the local match on the remainder, which is expected to total tens of millions of dollars just to finish the most immediate work.

When you generously authorized the 100% federal share on October 3rd of last year, less than two weeks after the Virgin Islands was decimated by the second Category 5 hurricane in the month of September, none of us could have fully anticipated how much time and effort it would take to achieve the most immediate response and recovery objectives, yet we have made substantial progress.

Over the past five months, we have restored nearly 100% of the power; cleared our roads and harbors of debris; completed distribution of unprecedented quantities of food, water and other essential supplies; started to make emergency repairs in our homes; and together with our federal partners have taken the first bold steps on the long road to recovery.

I hope that you will understand that we have been diligent, accountable and transparent in our efforts and rigorous in our response and project management. Without the significant results I described above to demonstrate our progress, I would be hesitant to ask the federal government to continue to pay 100% of the costs for a little bit longer.

In considering our request, please consider the following examples of why we believe that an extension is justifiable:

Category A—Off-Island Shipment of Debris.—Our two landfills in the USVI are both nearing capacity and under federal consent decree to be closed; therefore, we are extremely limited in our debris removal options.

For several months we had been working on a plan with FEMA and the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to incinerate most of the 750,000 cubic yards of vegetative material that has been collected; however, in January, FEMA advised us that, due to their new interpretation of territorial laws, they could no longer be able to support incineration. Subsequently, FEMA has agreed to ship hurricane debris out of the Territory, but it will take additional months for the Mission Assignment amendment to be fully implemented and for all debris to be sent to its final destination off-island. While we are fully cooperating with our federal partners, we cannot control FEMA's timing for completion of the debris removal.

Similarly, FEMA, USACE, the US Coast Guard and EPA are working under a Mission Assignment to crush and dispose of nearly 350 salvaged vessels outside of the Territory. This has been a complex and well-executed project; however, the schedule for this project is also federally managed and will take at least several more weeks to complete beyond the deadline.

Accordingly, on January 26th, our FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO), Mr. William Vogel, wrote to Mr. Christopher Logan, FEMA Public Assistance Division Director:

“FEMA’s denial of ACI [Air Curtain Incineration] use was just rendered. Understandably, this multi-agency coordination effort will take time and resources that will extend outside the March 15, 2018 deadline. Based on these extenuating circumstances that are outside the control of the territory, I recommend the approval of the time extension and 100% federal cost share funding requested.”

We hope you will support FCO Vogel's recommendation.

Category B—Emergency Housing Repairs.—On February 12th the USVI finally launched our FEMA-funded STEP Emergency Housing Repair program, which is expected to complete critical repairs to the homes of as many as 12,000 Virgin Islands families over the next 3 to 4 months.

While we now have a comprehensive plan and full slate of contractors in place to carry out this work at an unprecedented pace, we only received the final program guidance from FEMA on December 8th, and even now, we are still awaiting the FEMA Project Worksheet that will lock-in the federal funding commitment. While we are willing to lean as far forward as possible, in order to be fiscally responsible, we were forced to delay our start date until we at least received the tentative funding commitment from FEMA which we only received last week.

Category B—Temporary Hospitals and Schools.—One of the most severe impacts of Hurricanes Irma and Maria is that they completely decimated the critical healthcare system of the Territory, wiping out our only three primary care facilities—one hospital each on St. Thomas and St. Croix as well as the clinic on St. John. As a result, to this day, any seriously ill or injured Virgin Islanders must be

evacuated to the mainland for medical care, and those with chronic illnesses who were taken to the mainland after the hurricanes are unable to return home.

Recognizing that it will very likely take at least a couple of years to reconstruct our hospitals and clinic, on September 23rd—just a few days after Hurricane Maria—our hospital leadership made their initial request to FEMA for temporary (modular) hospital buildings. Unfortunately, FEMA's first attempt to meet this requirement was to provide a tent structure; however, after the first one arrived in late October, all stakeholders agreed this would not provide a safe condition for providing medical care in the Territory.

Since that time, we have been working with FEMA to gain approval for installation of suitable modular structures; however, it was only on January 30th that we finally received approval for the architectural and engineering design work necessary to develop the bid specifications for these temporary facilities. Once these specifications and bid documents are completed, FEMA will then have to approve the purchase of the modular buildings; FEMA expects that it will then take several months for the structures to be manufactured, shipped and installed.

We do understand that this type of work takes time; however, we are heavily reliant on federal expertise to guide us through the procurement process and, as a result, we cannot move the process along any faster than our federal partners can support.

Similarly, we have three dozen damaged school buildings, nearly a third of which need to be completely reconstructed. In the meantime, our students have been attending classes in split sessions and in partially damaged buildings, some of which are plagued with mold and have roofs that leak during the frequent rainstorms that we experience throughout the year.

As you know, one of my top priorities is to ensure that all of our school children are in a safe and secure learning environment when they return to school next September. Although we have been working diligently on this project since last September, it was just last week that FEMA gave tentative approval for us to purchase the first 154 temporary (modular) classrooms. As is the case with the hospitals, the design, bidding, manufacturing and transportation and installation of these facilities will take many months and we are hopeful that with maximum efforts by all that we can have these in place for the next school year, but much of the timing remains under FEMA's control for approval of both the scope of work and funding.

Mr. President, these are just a few examples of the types of projects which, despite the best efforts of many hundreds of hardworking federal and territorial staff, simply cannot realistically be completed by March 15th. We have all tried very hard and now must appeal to you for relief. I am hopeful that your intent in setting the March 15th deadline was to encourage us to work as hard as we have, and that you will see fit to recognize these remarkable accomplishments by granting us the additional time for 100% federal funding as requested above.

As Governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands, I understand that we cannot expect our fellow U.S. citizens to carry the full financial burden of our recovery; however, the fiscal reality is that we have borrowed funds up to our full debt capacity, including taking FEMA Community Disaster Loans, we have had to commit all of our insurance proceeds to urgent needs beyond what federal programs will cover, we have exhausted what small amount of emergency funds we had at our disposal, and we are still facing the need for nearly a half-billion dollars of local match on FEMA Public Assistance Permanent Work (Categories C–G) and the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

For the foreseeable future, the only source of funds that we will have available to us to cover the non-federal share on any FEMA work is the HUD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG–DR) funds allocated to us from Congressional appropriations. While we are thankful to have recently been allocated \$243 million of CDBG–DR funds as announced by HUD just over a week ago, we have been strongly encouraged by HUD to use these funds to the maximum extent possible to address unmet housing and local business recovery needs. While we will undoubtedly have to carve out some of the CDBG–DR funds for non-federal match on FEMA projects, we would be very appreciative if you could help us to minimize this by extending the 100% federal funding for all FEMA Emergency Work.

Mr. President, let me end where I started, by thanking you immensely for all that you and your Administration have done to support us. I trust that the U.S. Virgin Islands can be viewed as a model for working with the national government in responding to natural disasters and more hopeful that our success can be viewed as one of the wins of your Administration.

On behalf of a grateful Territory, I am deeply thankful for your leadership and our partnership with our federal family.
Sincerely,

KENNETH E. MAPP,
Governor.

LETTER FROM HONORABLE PETER DEFazio AND HONORABLE BENNIE G. THOMPSON

MARCH 13, 2018.

President DONALD J. TRUMP,
The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Washington, DC 20500.

DEAR PRESIDENT TRUMP: We write to urge you to extend the Federal cost share for debris removal and emergency protective measures, including direct Federal assistance, for the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) for damage caused by Hurricanes Irma and Maria. As you are aware, the 100 percent Federal cost share for these activities expires on or around March 15, 2018. Much work remains on the Islands, and an extension of the 100 percent Federal cost share is crucial to completing this work.

Under a mission assignment from FEMA, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been in charge of the timetable for collecting and removing debris. As of March 2, 2018, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and territorial agencies have collected 870,726 cubic yards of storm debris, while the U.S. Coast Guard has overseen the pollution mitigation and removal of 479 displaced vessels. Collected hazardous waste includes 5,950 bags of medical waste, 1,525 propane tanks, 69 pounds of refrigerant, 14,464 batteries and other waste products.¹ This is a substantial amount of debris over which the USVI has had no control.

This vast amount of debris has greatly exacerbated waste disposal issues. In fact, two landfills on the Islands were at or near capacity and, pursuant to a Consent Decree between USVI and the Environmental Protection Agency, were scheduled for permanent closure before the hurricanes. An extension of the cost share is warranted as certain debris must be moved off Island and this entire process has been outside of the USVI's control. The Territory should not have to pay a cost share because the Federal Government did not complete its job in a timely manner.

With respect to emergency protective measures, despite the extensive damage and lack of power, the Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority was prepared to begin work in early January and requested approval of a Sheltering and Temporary Essential Power (STEP) program at that time. FEMA, however, did not enter the request into its system until on or about February 16, 2018. Although FEMA has still not issued final approval of the STEP program request, the USVI recently began to implement the program. As a result, the STEP program in the USVI is barely underway. Once again, an extension of the Federal cost share is necessary due to the delay caused by FEMA.

We strongly supported the recent extension of the 100 percent Federal cost share for debris removal and emergency protective measures, including direct Federal assistance, for Puerto Rico and believe that conditions on the USVI justifying a similar extension. We urge you to execute such an extension without delay. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

PETER DEFazio,
Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.
BENNIE G. THOMPSON,
Ranking Member, Committee on Homeland Security.

Ms. PLASKETT. Thank you.

Progress has been made, but despite best collective efforts, the territory has not physically been able to finish all of these projects by March 15 deadline, and it simply does not have the financial resources able to cover the local match on the remainder. The territory is still awaiting modular structure for use by schools and medical centers.

Until then, public schooling for the children of the Virgin Islands is operating on 4-hour rotations. This is expected to continue at

¹ <https://www.fema.gov/news-release/2018/03/02/6-months-after-two-category-5-hurricanes-struck-us-virgin-islands>.

least into the next school year, and access to care at hospitals remains limited. As a result, dialysis patients, inpatient care, and other services in the entire U.S. Virgin Islands remain off-island.

Congress has set up a system where FEMA structural demands that it guards its budget and gives only when requested or pressed by local governments. This is a structure which must be changed. It does not support the best interests of American citizens living in disaster areas.

FEMA has to, and as we have heard here, is willing and needs to the support of Congress to streamline the processes so that results and support can get to the people. The examples I give are just a few of the issues that the Virgin Islands remains faced with 6 months after Irma and Maria, and I look forward to the discussion and more questions on how to resolve these issues.

Thank you.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentlelady yields back.

The Chair recognizes Resident Commissioner González-Colón for an opening statement.

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and I want to thank you and all Members, Ranking Members of this committee for calling this hearing and allow us to be here on such an important matter.

I will thank the witnesses for answering the call and coming before Congress to answer for the response to an unprecedented disaster that affected millions of American citizens, including Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

It has been more than 5 months now that since we saw an event that none of us expected to see in American soil in our lifetimes. As I mentioned in a prior committee testimony, the jurisdiction of the size of Connecticut if that kind of jurisdiction lost all power generation and distribution capabilities. Most of the communication system collapsed. Nobody would allow Connecticut to be without power for so many months. That is the size of Puerto Rico.

We live in a scenario of the failure of all technological resources in which we counted for our daily lives. I think that when we check on that, we have still got 90 percent of generation but that doesn't mean people got power in their homes.

When you are looking to what is the goal to finish the job, most of the agencies are saying that that could be even March or even May of this year. So we are talking about 5 or 6 months waiting for power, not to account the hundreds of people with diseases or medical conditions that require for them to get a generator or have power in their houses.

According to FEMA and to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, this has been the biggest mission to restore utilities in those agencies' history. Yet, millions of Puerto Ricans ask themselves, what is taking so long?

One of my biggest question will be how much more resources both agencies need to finish the job? How long it will take to finish the last line of help in the center part of the island, which we still got a lot of towns with less than 40 percent of power.

All things are currently occurring under discussion, but the estimate of the Corps is that the restoration should be done by the end of March. We are not talking about having a reliable system or a

resilient system. We are talking about the level of destruction defy everyone's expectation.

But my biggest concern will be here is that are we or any part of America spending months with their utilities down, what should happen? You will have a lot of people angry waiting for that kind of response.

So I do think the people of Puerto Rico are being very patient waiting to receive that kind of help. We know that our aging infrastructure was in a bad shape before the hurricane and that is the reason I thank all Members of this committee and the Members of the House who voted for assign the resources in the last supplemental. I think that supplemental will help guide Puerto Rico in terms of the recovery.

One of my biggest question will be how long it will take or what do you need to finish the job in 30 days? We cannot say that May or June or July are the best scenario for finish and having a 100 percent recovery of the island when we are going to face the hurricane season again during this summer. So this is one of the biggest challenge we got.

I do ask unanimous consent, Mr. Chairman, to allow a letter that I just sent to Commanding General Semonite and District Commander Jason Kirk to the Army Corps of Engineers asking them to extend the mission of the U.S. Army Corps and the contracts that have been provided to the island that are set to expire in March 19 and April 7, if you allow that to happen, Chairman?

Chairman MCCAUL. Without objection, so ordered.

[The information referred to follows:]

LETTER FROM HON. JENNIFFER GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN

MARCH 13, 2018.

LTG TODD SEMIONITE,

Commanding General and Chief of Engineers, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 441 G St. NW, Washington DC, 20314-1000.

COL JASON A. KIRK,

District Commander, Jacksonville District, USACE PO Box 4970, Jacksonville FL, 32232-019.

RE: POWER RESTORATION MISSION IN PUERTO RICO

DEAR LIEUTENANT GENERAL SEMIONITE AND CORONEL KIRK: Restoring electrical power to Puerto Rico has been our collective priority since the day Hurricane Maria exited the Island. Without power, our economy could not move; without power, water could not be distributed; without power, our fellow citizens were left in the dark.

Puerto Rico's critical need for power restoration in the aftermath of disasters has been a test for all of us who have been involved. USACE has been an invaluable resource in this moment of great need and it is vital to see to the full completion of the maintain good lines of communication between the team addressing the relief and rebuilding missions in Puerto Rico.

As of today, we are officially at the 90 percent generation capacity mark. However, the observation on the field makes it evident that electrical generation does not correlate with electrical service to homes across Puerto Rico. Only six out of 78 municipalities have reported 100 percent power restoration, knowing full well that the fragility of the system can erase these gains in the blink of an eye. There are still municipalities in the central mountainous region with less than 60 percent restoration of service, with power restored mainly in the towns and commercial areas, leaving vast rural areas left in the dark. The movement of crews from areas with a high restoration rate to address the lagging areas only causes distress in the former communities, who feel that they are being abandoned without the job being completed. With well over a hundred thousand customers still lacking service, that is distressing.

USACE's contracts with Fluor Corporation and Power Secure are set to expire on March 19th and April 7th, respectively. Personnel from these companies have been working for the past 5 months in the municipalities that compose the mountain region—such as Cayey, Lares, Ciales, Morovis, and Utuado, to name a few examples—and, due to the difficulty of the terrain and the immensity of the devastation, they have not concluded their task; they should not leave until they do so.

Raising camp and leaving PREPA to finish the job is not an option. PREPA's contracting process to substitute USACE's personnel will take time, delaying relief for people who have already spent more than 6 months without power. Moreover, last week's winter storm Riley further highlights the uncertainty that would be caused if Fluor and Power Secure were to leave, when personnel working under PREPA's mutual aid agreement were recalled to attend to natural disasters in their own jurisdictions. After 6 months of no power or unreliable service, the average citizen on the street in those communities cannot tolerate even the perception that at this point we will begin to wind down the urgent relief mission and that the process of finishing the job will slow down.

I must urge USACE in the strongest terms to maintain the intensity of effort; to extend contracts as required, to maintain the presence of crews at a higher level than projected to address the areas where the job is not finished; to inform and advise the local authorities and the public of what are the time lines and keep the communications lines open; to assist in supplying PREPA with materials and technical assistance if and as necessary. The goal must be to have near 100 percent restoration—not generation—of power within a month and for the people in Puerto Rico to have visible evidence of this being pursued with a sense of urgency.

I wish to impress on the Corps leadership the importance of taking this need of the American citizens living in Puerto Rico into consideration in the making of decisions about the power restoration mission, and I am ready to bring before my colleagues in Congress any need for additional appropriations or for statutory language that will move this forward.

Again, I must thank all the men and women both military and civilian in USACE who have helped so much in the effort of Puerto Rico's recovery. Our mission is not complete. We must act quickly so that this project may retain its priority position. I look forward to an effective communication with the USACE team to make sure that Puerto Rico's needs are addressed.

Thank you for your service,

JENNIFFER A. GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN,
Member of Congress.

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN. Of course, we have got a lot of questions but the biggest of all those questions will be do we have the resources? Do we have the materials? Do we have the crews to handle those issues? I do know that that is not the mission of the Corps of Engineers, but in a moment like this we want you to finish the work you begin.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and with that, I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentlelady yields back.

We will go back to Members of the full committee, Mr. Rogers, from Alabama.

Mr. ROGERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Long, it is good to have you here. It is refreshing to finally have a witness that doesn't have an accent before this committee. But before I get to my questions, I wanted to address some of the comments about local government officials being disgruntled after a disaster.

I have been in this business 32 years. I was elected as a local county commissioner first and then served in the legislature 26 years here. Seen a lot of disasters over that period of time. These are traumatic events that are overwhelming to communities and is a Herculean effort to come in and try to do recovery.

I have always seen disgruntled local officials, and we always will. There is never going to be the perfect recovery. But we then need to remember how far we have come.

After the hurricane that struck New Orleans, that was a very poor performance anybody's standard. But FEMA has come a long way since then. I was on this committee and down in New Orleans during that period, but the last FEMA administrator was a complete pro and brought that department a long way.

This FEMA administrator is top quality, too, and they are doing a good job. They have done a really good job in this last year with these overwhelming numbers of disasters. We need to keep in mind that perfection is never going to happen.

But with that, Mr. Long, there was a story that came out that disturbed me. You know, it was in February that said it was reported that an entrepreneur, a Tiffany Brown, was awarded a \$156 million contract to provide some 30 million meals to Puerto Rico in the wake of Hurricane Maria. She delivered only 50,000 with only some limited staff working for her.

Then the story went on to describe how shoddy those meals were and how incapable she really was. It turns out she had been getting Government contracts from a lot of different departments over the years that she was not able to perform.

How is that happening? I mean, because it is just not happening in FEMA. How did this woman get this huge contract that she couldn't keep, fortunately, and we got somebody professional that took it. But how would that happen?

Mr. LONG. So there was never through the Federal awardee procurement systems that we use Government-wide, particularly FEMA as well, there was never an alert on the background that this company was not able to perform to meet the ramifications of the contract.

Let me back up to talk about the magnitude of this year as well when it comes to procurement and contracts. Going into the 2017 hurricane season we had 59 pre-positioned contracts to do water, ice, MREs, blue tarps, plastic sheeting, whatever. We had to initiate 1,973 additional contracts to cover the entire country from Calcinuria to the Virgin Islands.

Out of the nearly 2,000 contracts we had, only three were canceled, Tribute being one of them. But there was no alert process that went through that said stay away from this company. Now, of the two companies that defaulted on the three contracts, two of them no taxpaying dollars went out to.

You are correct. We spent \$225,000 on 50,000 meals which were delivered. They were not packaged correctly, in my opinion, and the timing of getting the meals, for whatever reasons, they defaulted on the contract. We canceled it in our due diligence. Three out of 1,973 contracts were canceled.

The problem with it is, is that now my agency as a result of going through this because there may have been other parts of the Government that didn't do their due diligence to throw the red flags into the system, now it is incumbent upon my agency to make sure that if the actions that were not taken or if they were trying to defraud us or whatever, that we alert them into the system as then follow the Department process if deemed necessary.

Mr. ROGERS. OK. Shifting gears, during these multiple disasters how did your emergency communications work, given the fact that power, as we just heard, power has been out for so long. Did that affect your ability for your first responders to communicate with each other and communicate with local folks?

Mr. LONG. So obviously, as I said in my opening statement, the problem is is we do not have a resilient and a redundant communications network so everything—

Mr. ROGERS. Why?

Mr. LONG. Well, because I think we have gotta reach out to the private-sector partners that, you know, we are being desensitized to our cellphones and to digital technologies. We are stepping away from landlines. But in the California wildfires a good portion of the capability was burned up. A good portion of the capability was blown out by Hurricane Irma and Maria.

Anytime you lose the ability to communicate two things happen. You lose situational awareness, you lose the ability, for example, in my opinion, it wasn't that there wasn't enough food and water on the island of Puerto Rico. It was communicating to people where to go to get it. It makes everything difficult.

We have to go back and navigate by stars, per se, to enter people into our individual assistance programs. So we have to strike up a very, you know, thoughtful conversation with the private-sector vendors of how do we build a system that doesn't go down, that is prepared for all hazards so that we don't lose that capability? It is crucial. It is beyond FEMA's ability to do it.

Mr. ROGERS. Thank you for your service.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. LONG. Thank you.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentleman yields.

Ms. Jackson Lee from Texas is recognized.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Let me thank the Chairman and Ranking Member for very wise effort. I hope that we can have succeeding hearings on the on-going recovery of our respective communities.

Let me acknowledge that to date, and the numbers may be somewhat inaccurate, but let me offer to say that there were 88 deaths due to Hurricane Harvey in the State of Texas and about 30 as of September 4 in my surrounding area, including my constituents who were a family of 6 who drowned trying to escape in northeast Houston.

I think it is important to acknowledge again that when we speak we speak for our brothers and sisters in the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, certainly in Florida and Louisiana and certainly in California. We speak in two different formats, one in appreciation. Being at the command station from the moment Hurricane Harvey hit, being based at the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston, there was no doubt that it was a collective effort that we were dependent upon the FEMA's rescue part of their work.

Certainly along with them the Coast Guard, and I personally am reminded of the first responders as we were sitting police and fire with two phones to our ears as people were calling in to be rescued. Those were difficult and dangerous and troubling times that many of my colleagues have been involved in in their own respective districts.

So Administrator, let me first of all say thank you and of course as you well know I had more than 300-plus individuals gathered in my district not even enough on Monday last who were denials, people in hotels that were crying and frustrated about whether they could stay or find housing. So we are still in a period of recovery.

I think it is important to express appreciation, but also to be honest on where we are today. Let me quickly try to express my interest and concern with breaking up FEMA or having FEMA have components of the rescue period, which is that early stage and then long-term recovery.

I have a text on my phone from a pastor who indicates that inspectors came and there was 4 feet of water and they said it was 4 inches and denied. My meeting was based upon recovery and asked people to bring their denial letters and I must say, all of our local officials will acknowledge that the numbers of denials in our community were enormous.

They particularly hit minority communities. In this text, it indicated the inspectors were not assessing some of our older homes properly and one statement, which I am trying to research, but I think it is important, that there were too many black employees that were hired that were temporary. We hope that that is not true.

But my question to you is: What are your thoughts about reforming FEMA on the rescue immediate and then the long-term part of it? As you answer that question, would you answer the question about the enormous number of vacancies that I hope to put into the record—I ask unanimous consent to put in the record—the list of vacancies which are enormous. I don't want to take time to call them at FEMA. I don't know how you can possibly do your job as you have indicated when there are so many vacancies.

Then the question with our——

Chairman MCCAUL. Without objection, so ordered.

LIST SUBMITTED BY HON. JACKSON LEE

POSITIONS THAT ARE VACANT OR ARE DESIGNATED AS ACTING

Source: Federal Yellow Book Pages Winter 2018 Edition (pages 423–428)

Office of the Administrator

Advisor to the Administrator (Vacant)

Counselor to the Administrator (2 positions) (Vacant)

Assistant to the Administrator Area of Responsibility: National Guard Bureau (Vacant)

Office of the Deputy Administrator (Acting)

Senior Advisor to the Deputy Administrator (Vacant)

Staff Assistant and Scheduler (Vacant)

Staff Assistant (Vacant)

Office of Executive Secretariat

Director (Vacant)

Office of Equal Rights

Affirmative Employment Program Manager (Vacant)

Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist (Vacant)

Senior Advisor to the Secretary

Senior Advisor to the Secretary for Emergency Management (Vacant)

Center for Faith-Eased and Neighborhood Partnerships

Director (Vacant)

Deputy Director (Vacant) [The only position staffed is the Executive Officer]

Office of the Chief Financial Officer

Chief Financial Officer (Acting)

Deputy Chief Financial Officer (Acting)

Business Operations Staff Director (Vacant)

Office of Policy, Program Analysis, and International Affairs

Associate Administrator (Acting)

Deputy Assistant Administrator (Acting)

Grant Program Directorate

Senior Advisory (Vacant)

Integrated Public Alert and Warning System Division

Director (Vacant)

National Preparedness Directorate

Assistant Administrator (Acting)

Deputy Assistant Administrator (Acting)

National Exercise Division

Director (Vacant)

National Integration Center

Director (Acting)

Deputy Director (Vacant)

National Preparedness Assessment Division

Director (Acting)

Deputy Director and Program Evaluation and Special Projects Branch Chief (Vacant)

Enterprise Business

Chief (Vacant)

Support Services and Facilities Management Division

Director (Vacant)

Executive Officer (Vacant)

Publishing, Personal Property and Support Branch Chief (Vacant)

Regional Operations Branch Chief (Vacant)

Office of the Chief Component Human Capital Officer

Deputy Chief Component Human Capital Officer (Acting)

Office of the Chief Procurement Officer

Deputy Chief Procurement Officer (Vacant)

Executive Officer (Vacant)

Field Operations Directorate

Deputy Director (Vacant)

Recovery Directorate

Deputy Assistant Administrator (Acting)

National Disaster Recovery Planning Division

Contract Financial Management Branch Chief (Acting)

Technology and Support Branch Chief (Vacant)

Response Directorate Operations Division

Director (Acting)

Federal Insurance Mitigation Administration

Associate Administrator (Acting)

Administrative Specialist (Vacant)

Senior Counselor (Vacant)

Risk Analysis Division

Director (Vacant)

Assessment and Planning Branch Chief (Vacant)

Business Analysis Branch Chief (Vacant)

Risk Insurance Division

Director (Vacant)

Risk Reduction Division

Director (Vacant)

Deputy Director (Vacant)

Floodplain Management Branch Chief (Vacant)

Ms. JACKSON LEE [continuing]. Resources the Texas General Land Office is trying to staff up. We need 90. I understand there are 33. I don't know if FEMA will help with the monies coming in that are part of FEMA assistance dollars to be able to help do the housing part of the second half of the work.

So could you start on the reordering of FEMA and the staffing and how we are going to recover? Let me also acknowledge Representative—I am sorry, Mary Turner and our Harris County judge, the Governor, all of us working together? I yield to you.

Mr. LONG. Thank you, Congresswoman. So in regards to the response, you know, it is my job to coordinate the firepower of 32 Federal Government agencies down to do the life-saving, life-sustaining mission, which from where I sit was pretty unprecedented, the number of lives that were saved and different things that are there.

The problem is is that it has got to be more than FEMA from the standpoint in the recovery, but I believe it starts on the preparedness and then it goes back to a true culture of preparedness. For example, there is too much of an insurance gap and we learned that in Harvey. We learned that in Texas alone that we have got to go back to the basics to say that any house can flood regardless if you are shown in a flood map or not.

We have to double the number of insurance policies and, you know, the level of assistance that FEMA puts out on an average through individual assistance is like \$3,000, \$4,000, \$5,000. If you are properly insured the average payout in Harris Country right now is like \$110,000. How do we help people get insurance and properly insured to speed up their recovery?

I cannot make people whole, as you realize. You know, the toughest part is we still have a huge population in hotels and it is the toughest part is transitioning them out of the hotel and into more of a housing solution that is on their property.

That is going to require more than FEMA again. We are not housing experts, and that is why I am asking for the granting authority to be able to give the Governor the ability to purchase their own trailers, purchase their own innovative housing, you know, tech capabilities that are out there.

I believe that a Governor can do it faster, quicker, and cheaper than FEMA ever can because I am having to physically buy manufactured homes. I am having—use through the defense production authorities that I have. It is a cumbersome, time-consuming process.

I proactively put travel trailers back on the table because there is more volume and easier access to travel trailers to be able to do that. But I am not the housing expert. We have to have more conversations with HUD, with SBA, with our Governors to say what

is the right mix? What are the swim lanes and capabilities that we need? Thank you.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentlelady's time has expired.

I recognize Mr. Perry.

Mr. PERRY. Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen, thanks for your attendance. I am over here. I will start out as as a guy who has worked in this arena a little bit, State disasters and some Federal disasters as as a Pennsylvania guardsman. I am just wondering, especially in these broad-scale disasters from FEMA's standpoint and from the Corps' standpoint as well, is there anything that the Guard can do better? Is there anything that inhibits us?

I know that it is hard to pre-position certain—you don't know what you need sometimes until you need it, right? You have different States and different services, whether it is the Air Guard or the Army Guard with different requirements and so on and so forth.

I am just wondering from your standpoint is there anything that we fall short on? Is there anything that we can improve State-to-State to respond and be helpful and responsive in a critical time of need?

Mr. LONG. Well, first of all, my hat is off to the National Guard. I mean, we, you know, here again, they are one of the most critical partners that we have and one of the most critical assets that a Governor has. We saw them do yeoman's work when it comes to delivering water, ice, MREs, to saving lives.

The issues that have been raised to me by General Lengyel and others and as well as Governors falls in line with the emergency management mutual aid assistance compacts in EMAC.

Mr. PERRY. Right.

Mr. LONG. The speed in which the National Guard assets are reimbursed. I don't have the authority. If you were the Governor of New York and say and Governor Rossello worked out an EMAC deal and you are going to provide Governor Rossello your National Guard, I don't have the ability to reimburse you directly.

All my reimbursement authority under the Stafford Act has to go through the Governor to you so you are dependent upon that Governor, the requesting Governor, reimbursing you back.

That is the problem as I understand it. I don't know how to solve that problem but—

Mr. PERRY. So that is not a FEMA relationship, so to speak. It is more of a guard bureau-to-State relationship—

Mr. LONG. Well, EMAC—

Mr. PERRY [continuing]. As you understand it?

Mr. LONG. Yes, so EMAC is a Governor-to-Governor contract. Quite frankly, I don't know if you want FEMA involved in that Governor-to-Governor contract.

Mr. PERRY. Right. I am not saying we do. I just want to know where the shortcomings—

Mr. LONG. Right.

Mr. PERRY [continuing]. So we can try and improve.

Mr. LONG. Yes, right, so that is it. If I get involved then they have got to adhere to my procurement rules, 2 CFR Part 200. Honestly, you don't want that.

Mr. PERRY. So it is essentially just the speed between which Governors come to agreement and then inform you?

Mr. LONG. Right, and then reimburse each other.

Mr. PERRY. OK.

Mr. LONG. You know, it is they have to cut that contract up front.

Mr. PERRY. OK. I have another question. I am sensitive to some of the things that my good friend Ms. Gonzalez spoke to regarding power and per the information I have it is, you know, September 20 was when the hurricane hit Puerto Rico.

Irma I think about 10 days prior so they already sustained damage from Irma. Now we are, you know, we are nearly 7 months on, right? You know, March 20 it will be 7 months.

From the information I have Puerto Rico's power has been restored and I am curious about generation because the information I have says power has been restored to customers 90 percent, Virgin Islands 99.8, St. Thomas 99.1, or St. Croix—St. Thomas and St. Croix.

So the question I have is, is we had a hearing some time ago about how many crews the folks that are restoring the power, whether it is generation or whether it is distribution on the island, how many crews were available and we get the situation with PREPA, how bad the infrastructure was prior to the storm and that the ports of entry, whether air or sea were damaged heavily and it just made it hard to, even if you had pre-positioned assets, all those things withstanding, how many crews do you know, if you do know, are still on the ground on the island and to do this work? How many do you think are required?

Mr. LONG. I would need to yield to General Jackson.

Mr. PERRY. Sure, absolutely.

Mr. LONG. He owns the contracts for that.

General JACKSON. Sure, Congressman, thanks for that. You know, at the height of the activity on Puerto Rico where we had the most number of boots on the ground we had about 6,000 line workers that were a combination of what fell underneath the Corps of Engineers command and control and what fell underneath the contracts that PREPA's managing.

Today the Corps of Engineers has about 1,317 folks on the ground. PREPA has 2,100 or so, 2,200 line workers on the ground. That has changed over time.

There is something called a unified command group which is headed by Mr. Carlos Torres, who is the Governor's storm response coordinator. He is the one who leads a group, includes FEMA, Corps of Engineers and includes PREPA leadership and representatives from the Governor's office.

Every day they meet and they take a look at material availability, prioritization of line repair, and they make decisions on how lines are assigned, what requirements are out there and try to—

Mr. PERRY. Sir, I don't want to cut you short, but I am out of time here. I am interested to know what your estimate is of 100 percent distribution completion on the island, if you know? If you know that?

General JACKSON. Congressman—

Mr. PERRY. It has been a long time to be without power. I mean, you can imagine, right?

General JACKSON. Yes, it has been a long time. We are estimating or we have estimated that it would be probably mid-May before 100 people, 100 percent of all the stuff—

Mr. PERRY. Mid-May?

General JACKSON [continuing]. Is done. Yes, sir.

Mr. PERRY. All right, thank you.

I yield, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentleman yields.

Mr. Payne is recognized.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for being here and appreciate your testimony.

You know, staying focused on the territories, in Puerto Rico nearly 1 in 3 schools lacks electricity and many also lack consistent access to clean water. This has forced many schools to operate on a limited daily schedule leading to school-age children in Puerto Rico missing out on more than 20 million-fold days of learning.

What plans do you have in place to ensure that no displaced child is out of an educational setting for more than 30 days in the future?

Mr. LONG. Congressman, I would have to get back to you in writing on that. I don't know.

Mr. PAYNE. Well, you know, we have situations that I have brought up in the past surrounding children and their needs during disasters. You know, we feel that more attention has to be paid to the special circumstances not being with the parents reconnecting with them after disasters.

The example that I use the most is several years ago the tornadoes in Oklahoma, there was an issue about reuniting children with their parents after the situation. Also the need to identify areas of learning. You know, their daycare centers sometimes aren't listed and first responders just went right past, you know, because they are in private areas.

So we need to designate how we locate children as well in these areas. But it is something that, you know, I have been a proponent of, making sure that we have some type of, you know, they are not little people.

They are children and so they need guidance and someone to look out for them during these issues as they arise and then being reunified with their parents.

So please, as you formulate, you know, your mission going forward that you keep that in mind and also, you know, we can discuss it more at a later day.

Mr. LONG. Just a couple resources we do have resources for children in disasters. I agree with you. We have to do more. I have two young boys, 11 and 8, and I think, but here again, this is far greater than FEMA.

This is a partnership with FEMA, nongovernmental organizations and the Department of Education for example, because there are tons of statistics. You know, for example, spousal abuse goes up after disasters, all types of things. So we have to be able to recognize these things.

But here again, I don't know if FEMA's the expertise when it comes to this, and we need partners. The other thing is is that FEMA in the past has developed programs such as NMETS. It is the National mass evacuation tracking systems for large-scale disaster evacuations of trying to reconnect.

We have established family reunification concepts after disasters as well. It might just be we need to further promote and train at the local and State level as to what the availability of our resources are. Thank you, sir.

Mr. PAYNE. Absolutely, and, you know, last year, you know, FEMA had the National advisory council recommend the creation of something along that line to support center of excellence, you know, type training for emergency preparedness. So, you know, that might be an area to look at as well.

Thank you, and I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentleman yields.

Mr. Donovan is recognized.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, all three of you, for coming and sharing your expertise with us. I am the Chairman of the subcommittee of this committee that deals with emergency preparedness, response, and communications. Five minutes of questioning, even with all my colleagues, there is not enough time for us to delve into all the areas of, as we have put as the title of this hearing, "Lessons Learned".

So I was wondering if there is a way you could compile for us the lessons that we have learned from these disasters? It is absolutely amazing to me the amount of disasters that you had to deal with simultaneously or consecutively with the resources that you have. We haven't even talked about the wildfires and mudslides in California, the amount of hurricanes we have had.

In my role as Chairman, it would be very helpful to us if we had a compilation of all the things that you have learned from this that we could help you for the future. Because places like Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Florida, Texas, Louisiana, they are going to get hit with other hurricanes.

My understanding is, from my colleagues who live in tornado areas or even earthquake areas, there is not much warning there, but with hurricanes we follow these models, these patterns from storms developing off the coast of Africa and then try to predict where they are going to hit. So it would be very helpful to us if we had that so we could help you.

In my role, I visited Puerto Rico about 3 weeks after the storm and then recently with Jennifer went down to—and John Rutherford—went down to see how the recovery is coming.

The island was consumed. The storm was bigger than the island. It sat over there. My recollection is it moved at about 8 miles an hour after it hit landfall and for 36 hours dumped more rain than Puerto Rico experiences in an entire year. The ground couldn't absorb it.

When we flew over in Blackhawk helicopters without doors and I told you in the muster room I am afraid of heights, but we went up to visit the island and to observe all the devastation. The island was brown there.

The challenges of getting supplies to folks who were just isolated because they are an island, and I suspect when you have a disaster that you are responding to in the mainland you could drive supplies to. You have them pre-staged somewhere and after the storm is over you can—it is very difficult, the airport being closed, the port being closed. Your first responders on Puerto Rico being victims themselves, very challenging.

We witnessed when we went back a few weeks ago to see how, General, you have to take telephone poles by helicopter up to the mountains to get them into the ground and then by helicopter stringing along the electrical wiring to provide those poor folks up there with electricity.

It is an amazing challenge and one that I think, again, would be helpful if you could tell us in some type of report of what we could do to better be prepared for the future.

One of the things I would also ask you to do for me, Brock, is I have a lot of attached housing where I live. I represent New York City, parts of New York City, and to mitigate for flood insurance a lot of the people that live in my district cannot raise their houses.

So if FEMA could come up with some mitigators to those folks who can't raise their homes so they can experience reductions in their flood insurance, that would be very helpful.

The last thing I would like to speak about before my time runs out, I have constituents who took that responsibility and spoke about and are trying to get flood insurance.

But they are not able to pay it in full at one time. Part of the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act of 2014 created this system where people could pay by payment plan.

One particular woman who reached out to me, Camille Soulle, who tried to do that and the system is not in place yet. So if you could look into that for me, I would very much appreciate it.

Again, this woman and many people are trying to do the right thing, protect their properties by having National flood insurance, but can't pay it in full or in whole and want to use this payment plan that we have put into place. If you could look into that for me I would very much appreciate it.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the remainder of my time. Thank you.

Chairman MCCAUL. All right. The gentleman yields.

Mrs. Demings from Florida is recognized.

Mrs. DEMINGS. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, and to our Ranking Member and to our witnesses. Thank you for being here today and thank you for all that you do to restore families after natural disasters. I grew up in Florida, still represent Florida, served as a first responder and so I am no stranger to hurricanes.

Mr. LONG. I do want to ask you, according to reports, FEMA has denied about 23 percent of the 2.9 million applications for individual assistance after Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria, with the majority of those denials being in Florida. Several of my constituents report that their applications have been rejected for technicalities, typos, or an omitted document.

Rather than a plain language request for additional information, they received a 4-page denial. My office had the opportunity to assist one of the families whose home was destroyed by patches of

toxic mold covering every surface, but because they were missing one insurance form they faced a termination of their transitional housing assistance.

Now fortunately we were able to help them resubmit their application and they qualified for an additional 18 months of continued rental assistance.

So my question is how does this denial rate compare to prior disasters? What factors might explain the difference, if any?

Mr. LONG. So I don't know what the, you know, where that rate compares, but I can tell you that the fundamental problem when it goes back to reducing the complexity of FEMA, one of the problems that we have is we immediately go out and say call 1-800-621-FEMA. We blanket communities.

The problem that I have with that is is that we need to change the dialog on that. It needs to be call 1-800-621—if you meet this specific criteria to where aid can be rendered to begin with, because it sets up a negative relationship with the disaster survivor versus our agency right off the bat. It leads to too many calls being rejected.

Now, if your citizens are being not afforded individual assistance because of simple technicalities, I would like to work with you directly on what those technicalities are so that we can streamline whether it is the way the website is designed to register systems or maybe we got it wrong and I can refer you back to an NIA case manager in the joint field office in Florida. I would be happy to do that.

We regularly have dialog like that, and I do believe it is incumbent upon us to make sure that we leave no stone unturned when it comes to the citizens, so—

Mrs. DEMINGS. So would you say the process if a person did not have all of the documentation that they needed, do you know if the process is an automatic denial at that point? Or do you see—

Mr. LONG. Well—

Mrs. DEMINGS [continuing]. This as additional information?

Mr. LONG. I wouldn't say it is a denial, but the problem is, is that people don't come prepared to the first phone call because we are not doing enough to say when you call make sure you have your insurance information, Social Security number, and in some cases I think it is a messaging problem that we have got to get better at the first time.

Then maybe they come back and then they are put in. But if there is a true fundamental flaw with the system and the way it is designed then I am all ears. I would be happy to understand it and change it.

Mrs. DEMINGS. OK. Thank you for that. Earlier you talked about Texas and it being a model, and I believe you said that, you know, in order to appropriately respond it has to be Federally-supported, State-managed, and locally-executed. Is that correct?

Mr. LONG. Right.

Mrs. DEMINGS. You know, and as I mentioned in my opening statement, you know, being no stranger to hurricanes in Florida, could you talk a little bit about the Florida response and may perhaps we might be able to improve and at which level?

Mr. LONG. So Governor Scott has done a tremendous job as well, and me calling out Texas specifically is no shot at Governor Scott by any means or any of the other Governors. Florida is also a model. Florida has also been a gold standard as well.

They are also flush with resources, too. You know, the thing about it is what I appreciate is, is that when a Governor takes over the response and the recovery and provides me clear outcome goals of what they are striving for, then I can better the resources down to them from a financial standpoint or from physical resource standpoint.

I would like FEMA to become more of a block-granting agency to fund the response and allow the community to respond and recover the way they see fit. I don't know Florida better than you, ma'am.

I don't know Florida better than Governor Scott. So how do I get the authorities and arrange the support down to where Florida can recover the way Florida wants to recover? Puerto Rico can recover the way Puerto Rico wants to recover.

It is my goal to provide technical expertise to Director Wes Maul is going to be testifying with you together to say, hey, here are some best practices. Here is the way to use this funding to ultimately create a more resilient Florida.

I am tired of going back into communities as an emergency manager and repeating this vicious cycle of things get blown out, we repair it. Things get blown out and we repair it. That is why I believe we have to also do more mitigation on the front end to prevent these things.

The insurance gap is only growing. It is frustrating because when people are uninsured or let their insurance lapse, like what we saw in California, they paid off their mortgage, the fire comes in and burns down their house. They are trying to have a little extra money in retirement.

As a result then that becomes an individual assistance problem. My individual assistance program grows daily the need for FEMA is growing daily. I want it to go the opposite direction. But we can't do it alone.

Mrs. DEMINGS. Thank you.

I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentlelady yields.

Mr. Higgins is recognized.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Long, for your continued service and General Jackson, as well Mr. Kelly. Thank you for being here today.

I represent south Louisiana, gentlemen, and we are certainly well-experienced regarding hurricanes and natural disasters and recovery thereafter and preparation prior. My State provided support to Texas pre-staging a rescue operation, sheltering prior to Harvey, and in the wake of Harvey.

I personally went into Texas immediately after Harvey on the Thursday morning and participated in rescue operations on the ground in Texas. I would like to talk about infrastructure challenges in the continental United States versus Puerto Rico.

But regarding the process for reimbursement to the States for domestic response, Mr. Long, what do you believe is an acceptable

time frame for reimbursement? How can FEMA improve the process for reimbursement to the States that at their own expense, sometimes tremendous expense, immediately participate in sheltering and rescue operations in the wake of a natural disaster?

Mr. LONG. So we started to look at and it is something that we have implemented kind-of after post-Katrina as expedited public assistance payments down, particularly if there are liquidity issues or issues to pay for the emergency services right off the bat, which I believe is a success. We need to continue to do it.

Always we have to protect against waste, you know, waste or inaccurate funding and that type of thing. We—

Mr. HIGGINS. Do you think the reimbursement process that we hope to improve would be included in your vision for reform and streamlining the operations? Where greater availability of block grants to Governors and give them—

Mr. LONG. Yes.

Mr. HIGGINS [continuing]. Give them the opportunity to make these decisions and be your filters so we get FEMA out of it? And allow the Governors of the 50 sovereign States greater flexibility on how to respond quickly?

Mr. LONG. Absolutely. That is—you know, and we have to do it. It would be a phased, delicate process to make sure that we, you know, we are protecting the taxpaying dollars but we are affording the Governor to truly find ways to be resilient.

I believe Governors can do business quicker and more innovatively than the Federal Government.

Mr. HIGGINS. I agree, and I support that effort and hope to be a part of the legislative effort to make that happen.

General JACKSON, regarding infrastructure post-storm, Houston, one of the most advanced cities in the Nation, certainly by any measure, and yet in the city of Houston both air traffic control towers at the two major airports in Houston were down after Harvey.

First responders—of course commercial traffic was shut down, but first responders' air traffic was handled through the Army Memorial Hospital air traffic control tower at their—they have a helipad, of course, at their airport.

It struck me as in the continental United States the level of construction and infrastructure is quite different from, for instance in Puerto Rico, the island of Puerto Rico. Yet even in Texas, in Houston, the air traffic control towers were down immediately after Harvey for first responders to use.

So regarding the standards for grid construction, for instance in Puerto Rico, my understanding, my sources advise me that prior to the storm approximately 20 percent of the grid was down in Puerto Rico. Is that correct?

General JACKSON. Congressman, the grid had some significant deferred maintenance issues and significant operability issues before Irma hit. Irma, when it came through caused some damage to the grid that wasn't fully repaired before Maria came in and further damaged the grid.

Mr. HIGGINS. So your efforts in Puerto Rico, have you essentially restored the grid to its pre-storm performance?

General JACKSON. Congressman, the Stafford Act allows us to restore the grid in its current configuration, but in fact, the grid in

Puerto Rico is about 44 years old. The average grid in the rest of the United States is about 15 years old.

So as we have gone and repaired the lines and the towers and all the components of the grid, and it is only transmission and distribution. We haven't been given any authority to work generation other than temporary generation that we have used to augment repair operations.

I mean, we are working continuing to build that back, and it is going to be a much better grid than it was when we inherited it just because of the State that it was in when we took over the restoration effort.

So it is not changing in configuration so we are not burying lines where lines were strung with transmission towers before-hand. But we are replacing what was damaged with modern equipment up to code. You know, the Puerto Rican grid had about 15 different types of transformers. The industry standard is four.

So as we have had to piece this back together we have had to put different components back in the system, which is going to make it a more efficient system when we are done.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you for your very thorough answer.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. DONOVAN [presiding]. The gentleman yields.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. Keating.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank all of you for your service. This is titled "Lessons Learned". Part of what I want to get into is that those lessons learned should be geared toward mitigation and prevention in the future of disasters. In that case I also want to associate with everything that is being said by the other Members, but I want to gear in on my district in particular.

It is probably the most coastal area. It is the south shore, the south coast, Cape Cod, and the islands. If it is not one of the biggest coastal areas it is one of them. I just want to address some of the important issues.

I think this boils down to we can't be expecting all of you to do more, and we are going to have to do more the way the cycle of climate change is going, with less. But in my district, you know, there are some examples. We are doing a 701 study on the Cape Cod Canal, vital safety area, navigation area in our area that has just been so delayed.

We have two connectors to almost 300,000 people in Cape Cod area—only two bridges. There is a study with that that is just so delayed. It is on-going, but delayed, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is ready and willing to work with us, and that is holding things back.

The potential for disaster is enormous. We have a nuclear plant, right, in one of the third worst in terms of safety, built on the coast, Fukushima's designed plant, yet those two bridges can cut off access to all those people if there is any kind of disaster.

On a daily basis the dredging issues in our area are enormous and that affects rescue missions and dealing with it.

So I want to say just a couple of things. No. 1, particularly General Jackson, we deal with the Army Corps daily in our area, the

personnel there, the administration there, the communication is excellent.

We work together. We strategize together. They do a great job, but again, the real issue, and when we talk to them is, we don't have enough money to do this. There is no way to prioritize for everything that is of equal or greater need. We have to do a job here.

Now, I have helped with the appropriation process here targeting in areas without earmarking, but we have been able to do that and work together. I understand the constraints that all of you are sitting under if you have to comment about not being funded adequately. Not just this administration but administrations before, sort-of they don't encourage you to say you are not adequately funded.

But the plain fact is you just can't do, I think it is irrefutable, you just can't do all these things with less.

So couple of things No. 1, I would ask you if you could, outside the hearing, in the next few weeks maybe deal with our staff here on that end. We are dealing so well with your staff in the regional level, honestly, working these things out.

Also if you could just comment generally, if you could, with the factor that not having enough resources to please everyone, without talking about budget numbers and getting yourself maybe compromised. How important that is, if you could?

General JACKSON. Congressman, sure, I will be glad to do that. First of all, you know, authorized but unconstructed projects that are in the Corps' portfolio right now top \$96 billion in fiscal year 2016 numbers. But we are only able to generate about slightly over \$1 billion every year in construction funding because there is not a limitless Federal budget.

I mean, there are a lot of demands, a lot of hard decisions have to be made. So but that is just the fact of what we have to deal with every day.

What we are doing is we are working very closely with the administration as they are putting forth their infrastructure package to the Congress. You talked about the speed at which we operate. We have identified or helped to identify a number of legislative proposals that will help us move faster.

We are working a number of proposals inside the administration to allow us to operate more quickly. We are participating in all of the different initiatives that the administration put forth specifically on regulatory streamlining, permit streamlining, and environmental review streamlining.

We are fully participative in all that as a whole of Government, which allows us and all the other resource agencies that work together to be able to sort-of move faster than we have been able to in the past.

Mr. KEATING. Well, I would certainly work with you on that. My time is running out but I would like to say on the flood insurance as well, we have questions outside of that where there is good bipartisan work being done. But go on.

Mr. LONG. Yes, so we need a lot of work on the NFIP reauthorization. It is not a healthy program and we need to make it financially solvent, no doubt about it.

In regards to funding, one thing I want to point out though is that the bread and butter of emergency management is the State and local levels of emergency management and Government. It is not just whether or not FEMA has got enough money.

It is our Governors and States—and not even Governors—State legislatures total, you know, really taking a look as a result of going through the season and saying does their State emergency management agency have what it needs?

Do their local emergency management agencies have what they need? Because a majority of the events that the locals and States are going to face, FEMA is not going to be involved.

Mr. KEATING. Right.

Mr. LONG. Yes.

Mr. KEATING. Well, thank you. Thank you. I would say in our State we are doing a pretty good job in that regard.

I yield back.

Mr. DONOVAN. The gentleman yields. I know Mr. Long has a hard stop at 12:30 so I would ask the remainder of the questions to be kept within the time period.

The Chair now recognizes Mr. Rutherford from Florida.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General JACKSON. I represent the three coastal counties in northeast Florida, Nassau, Duval, and St. Johns, and my question is, is beach nourishment and sand dune construction treated differently than other mitigation from storms?

General JACKSON. Congressman, it is not treated any differently.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. OK. Because here is my question, and I was really glad to hear you say that we are looking for ways to speed the process up. Colonel Kirk has been great to work with, him and his personnel.

But one of the issues that we are looking at, I have one home that is literally already falling into the ocean, and many more South Ponte Vedra Beach that are really on the edge of falling in, literally. I mean, they have already been undermined.

And FDEP, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection is working closely with us, but an 18-month study seems like a long time when your house is hanging on the edge.

So my question is: Are there other ways that we can get funding to the State after they pick up their piece of it, as they should, is there other ways that we can get that funding to them more quickly so that we can address these houses that are really on the verge?

General JACKSON. Congressman, I can tell you right now we are wide open to any ideas that you or your staff might have as well as Florida and the State government there. We have been in a number of discussions with them about how to move faster.

A lot of times the study process that you referred to that takes some period of time is driven by the environmental review process, which I think the administration has been looking at very closely to try to get done much more quickly and with less ability for other Federal agencies to have long-standing decisions that cause us to redo different portions of it.

So we are going to work really hard on that. I think the supplemental that the Congress passed has given us some broad discre-

tion to take a look at areas that are either need to be studied or are being studied right now or just need funding for nourishment. They have been very specific about waiving 902 or the cost limits that have been imposed based upon the authorization.

Also that when we do build the beaches back that we build them to full design, full construction requirements. So I think there is a lot of great potential for the projects that you are talking about with the supplemental that Congress passed.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Thank you very much for that, and I will look forward to working with you on that.

Mr. Long, I have to tell you, as a first responder myself, I am familiar with pre-positioning equipment and the mitigation after some of these horrible storms. Look, the last thing you want to do is pre-position your equipment on an island that is about to get hit by a Category 5 storm. So that is a bad idea.

But I will tell you that there was some pre-positioning that went on of some goods that were pre-positioned in a city that I represent, Jacksonville, Florida. As you know, I think the American maritime industry did a fantastic job in response to Puerto Rico's needs.

In fact, they had pre-positioned container units in Jacksonville within days of the port opening. Those goods were on the port, which actually allowed the mayor of San Juan to stand there and criticize the response with thousands of container units stacked up behind her.

The challenge was, is more people know, and I would like everyone to know, the challenge was distribution. You mentioned that. The communications, the transportation, all of that got in the way of distribution of goods and services.

As somebody who has been responsible for that in the past, I understand completely what you all were facing. So I would mention that, you know, the Jones Act was so politicized that there were folks on the news talking about how quickly the President suspended the Jones Act in Texas and how long it took for Puerto Rico. It was a 1-day difference. I went back and checked—1-day difference.

In addition to that, so much misinformation about the Jones Act and the cost of goods and services. Folks were actually improperly describing how the Jones Act even works, talking about—I heard an individual in Jacksonville on the news talking about the reason it costs so much is because foreign vessels have to sail into an American port, drop those goods off, and then reload those goods onto an American-flagged ship and sail it down to San Juan. Wrong. Those foreign ships can sail directly into San Juan, and they do all the time.

So, you know, there was a lot of politicization of what was going on down there. But I would like to ask one thing about the contract issue. Would it help if we created a database of these bad actors through these contracts?

Mr. LONG. Well, I believe that the database in the system exists. It just wasn't put in prior to us reaching out.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Oh, OK.

Mr. LONG. There was a resource training. But one thing I would like to follow up on regarding distribution and commodities, this is

the story that is not being told. As I said, we have hired approximately 1,300 Puerto Ricans to be part of the response and recovery and the future arm of emergency management.

What we are doing to prepare for the 2018 hurricane season is now we are starting to build a true network of emergency management at the commonwealth and local level that did not exist, in my opinion.

So what we are doing is we have planned a series of training and exercises that are going to culminate in a full-scale exercise in this coming June with the Governor, with the mayors, specifically designed around the distribution of commodities. We are also re-configuring some contracts. You don't just execute a contract and the ship shows up immediately.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Right.

Mr. LONG. It takes 7, 8 days to fully execute the Comfort in motion and ships like that. So we are doing a tremendous amount of work that is not being talked about, and it is not FEMA doing it for Puerto Rico and the commonwealth.

It is we are working with the commonwealth to make sure that they will have the State level and local level capability to manage this disaster in the future so that we reduce our footprint in that manner.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Thank you. I have several other questions, but my time is up.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DONOVAN. The gentleman yields.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Rhode Island, Mr. Langevin.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Thompson, and Members of the panel here today. Thank you very much for your testimony.

Let me start with Administrator Long and General Jackson. Climate change continues to increase the incidence of major storms and flooding, especially threatening the lives and livelihoods of residents in coastal States like my home State of Rhode Island.

Administrator Long and General Jackson, what steps are FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers taking to prepare coastal communities like mine for this increased risk and to mitigate the damage of future disasters?

Mr. LONG. I will start. There are provisions and mitigation planning so we require States and local governments to have mitigation plans. They are signed off on by FEMA, just kind-of your understanding of how you want to mitigate for future disasters.

There are sea-level-rise provisions that are in those mitigation standards that are there. The problem goes back to you have got to get hit with a disaster to be able to execute your mitigation plan if you want FEMA mitigation funding.

So the problem we have to solve in my opinion is we have got to get the pre-disaster mitigation up front so that people can execute those mitigation plans before the disaster occurs or things like sea level rise start to occur.

General JACKSON. Congressman, after Superstorm Sandy, the Corps worked with all the States in the northeastern part of the United States and also with experts adorn the world to identify

coastal risk and published the North Atlantic Coastal Comprehensive Study, which identified a lot of different risk areas and identified things that the Federal Government, the States, and the localities could do to address just what you have talked about.

So we are in the process right now of working with all the States on the northeast side that were impacted by Sandy to try and address those mitigation measures and lower the risks to the communities that are on the coastline.

With the Corps we incorporate everything that we know about climate change and sea level rise in our designs. So as we conduct studies on coastal resilience and in areas that we know have significant risk, we incorporate everything that we know about that and those are implemented into our design standard when we put those projects forward to the Congress for authorization.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Good. I think it is essential that we be as forward-leaning, as forward-thinking as we can on this issue preparing for climate change because it is here. What we can do to mitigate it is going to make everyone better off in the long run.

That is probably a whole other discussion about what we really need to do long-term to reverse the effects of climate change.

But let me start this. Natural disasters like hurricanes and floods and fires that we saw in 2017 certainly were devastating to countless people and communities in their path. For individuals with critical health conditions or disabilities, these effects are magnified, sometimes significantly.

Despite requirements that disaster planning consider and include accommodations for individuals who require accessible modes of communication or transportation and medical devices or other types of assistance, too many we found are left to fend for themselves when catastrophe strikes.

So Administrator Long, in your testimony you mentioned the importance of learning lessons about meeting the needs of survivors with access and functional needs. What lessons have FEMA and its partners learned from last year's disasters? What changes have been made to procedural guidance?

How were these recommendations monitored for compliance and implementation to ensure that people with disabilities are carefully considered in disaster planning, response, and recovery?

Mr. LONG. Well, first of all, I believe as a Nation, not just FEMA, but all entities need to bake in inclusion and functional and access needs as to part of their DNA every day. You know, I can't force a city to be ADA, you know, compliant.

But what I can do is start to organize recovery dollars that go into communities after the fact or mitigation dollars to help communities and emergency managers achieve a higher level of functional and access needs.

Most recently I hired a lady by the name of Linda Mastandrea, who is now FEMA's Office of Disability Integration Coordination. I have asked her to go out to understand and work across the lines with FEMA recovery office to say, look, when all of this funding comes down how do we actually help these communities improve facilities in a manner that they become more functional and access needs-compliant to ensure inclusion, you know, not only through

the future of the infrastructure that is built but also within our shelters.

We have a lot of work to do as a Nation, but that here again, this problem is far greater than FEMA. But we are working to address it every day. I would be happy to set you up with Linda Mastandrea. She is phenomenal.

She was most recently in South Korea. She is a Paralympian that has won, I think, 15 gold medals and phenomenal lady. She is also a lawyer, so she is very, very well-versed and I think you are going to see some changes in the way we handle functional and access needs.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Well, thank you. I look forward to that meeting and I would like to further continue our discussion on this topic. I have several more, but my time has expired.

I will yield back at this point, but I look forward to submitting my questions for the record and hope that you can get back to me as soon as possible on these and then I look forward to our continued discussion on this important topic.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. DONOVAN. The gentleman yields.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Nebraska, Mr. Bacon.

Mr. BACON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank all three of you for your leadership. You were put in a very tough situation with terrible hurricane, the airport down, the roads, the power. I mean, what a challenge. So I know you have been working this very hard.

My first question is for Administrator Long and General Jackson. What would be the criteria for considering mission complete?

Mr. LONG. We are still there. We are going to be there for years.

Mr. BACON. Be there for years.

Mr. LONG. You know, those—yes, I mean, you know, it is too early to grade myself or say mission complete. Bottom line is we are going to be administering dollars to help these communities overcome for years.

The one thing that I think that we are missing here is is that there weren't just four events last year.

Mr. BACON. Right.

Mr. LONG. Right now my staff is diligently working in 14 different States. Last year we picked up a new event every 3 days.

Mr. BACON. But just to clarify you think you will be in Puerto Rico for years?

Mr. LONG. Absolutely.

Mr. BACON. Like got to—

Mr. LONG. Absolutely.

Mr. BACON. General Jackson, anything else with that?

General JACKSON. Congressman, I mean, we are in Puerto Rico now. I have an area office there. We have Federal projects there. We work with the Government there on a daily basis, so we will always be in Puerto Rico—

Mr. BACON. Right.

General JACKSON [continuing]. And we will be supporting FEMA as long as Mr. Long has mission assignments for us to follow up on.

Mr. BACON. Let me ask you both, what would be the largest unexpected challenge that you had in Puerto Rico? Is there one thing that took you by the most surprise?

Mr. LONG. Getting the power back on solves so many problems. Bottom line is that was the toughest challenge. I do not control an aging system. I do not control deferred maintenance on a power grid.

I have to fix what I have inherited, and, you know, we rapidly put forward the mission and the mission assignment to the Army Corps of Engineers. This is the only situation where the Army Corps of Engineers is rebuilding the grid.

We have got to get to a model to where the grid is rebuilt by private industry, in my opinion, similar to the way it was done in California, Texas, and Florida.

Mr. BACON. All right. How has the bankruptcy of PREPA impacted the recovery efforts?

Mr. LONG. The liquidity efforts or the liquidity issues as a whole are very difficult. It compromises simple things such as EMAC agreements. People demand 100 percent right off the bat to do work when you bring in private contractors or other support for fear that they may not be repaid.

Mr. BACON. OK.

Mr. LONG. You know, we are working very closely with Governor Rossello, working very closely with the Treasury to make sure that we solve some of these problems so that the response and recovery doesn't slow down.

Mr. BACON. OK.

One final question for General Jackson, what regulatory relief is necessary to help you speed up these kind of efforts? Is there something we can do to pull some of the regulatory problems off your shoulders?

General JACKSON. Congressman, I think the administration has already taken a look at that, and they are really looking at how to streamline all environmental reviews that all ultimately result in permitting and other things that—

Mr. BACON. Right.

General JACKSON [continuing]. We are involved with. So I think we are well on track and everybody has been participating fully in that effort.

Mr. BACON. Thank you. Knowing that your time is short, I will yield back. Thank you.

Chairman MCCAUL [presiding]. The Chair recognizes Mrs. Bonnie Watson Coleman.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Long, hi. More than a decade after Hurricane Katrina, your office is still involved in audit disputes, including efforts to get a \$2 billion settlement with roads and infrastructure of the city overturned. Do you think that there is a limit on how long after an event audits should last? Is it an inefficient use of resources to Monday morning quarterbacking years-long audits more than a decade later? Are the communities affected this summer going to face decades of audits and no relief?

Mr. LONG. Well, I think we have to follow out the process and the process that is put in place is just for due diligence purposes.

We have to follow out the process. But when there are audits in question, and I have seen this as a former director of the Alabama Emergency Management Agency when there are deobligations in question or audits in question where there are large amounts of money looming over a community that may be de-obligated then it can impact their credit ratings going forward.

So I do think that we have to move quickly to make sure things like that don't occur. We have to move expeditiously, but I would also—

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Well, do you agree, sir, that 2 years is not moving expeditiously, that it is too long?

Mr. LONG. I don't—

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Is FEMA doing anything to sort-of—

Mr. LONG. Which situation are you specifically referring to?

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. I am talking about Katrina. That is what I was asking you about.

Mr. LONG. Oh, for Katrina?

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. The \$2 billion dispute and that has been in audit for 2 years?

Mr. LONG. I would have to get back or we would have to work with you.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Yes.

Mr. LONG. I am not sure which one it is unless I could defer to Mr. Kelly?

Mr. KELLY. Is it the water and sewer audit?

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Yes.

Mr. LONG. OK.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Listen, may we have a specific—

Mr. LONG. Sure.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Update on—

Mr. LONG. Sure.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Why this is taking so long? What is being done? Why are you lacking the resources to respond to it after 2 years? When can we expect relief here? Mr. Long, can we get that?

Mr. LONG. Yes, absolutely, but I would also refer to Mr. Kelly with OIG.

Mr. KELLY. Yes. That audit was initiated and completed within roughly a year of the additional obligations for that water and sewer project.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Yes.

Mr. KELLY. Very little was done immediately after Katrina. The inspector general's office has changed its style of auditing.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you.

Mr. KELLY. We try to be more proactive and much closer to when the money is being spent, not 10 years after it has been spent.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. So, you know, this is all good, you know, hypothetically, conceptually, and all that kind of stuff. We are talking about communities that are ravaged. People who have been displaced. People who can't get a job. People become ill because of these terrible hurricanes.

I mean, look at what has happened in both the Virgin Islands and in Puerto Rico. For the life of me, and Mr. Long, maybe you can answer this question.

With all the resources, with all the armed forces, with all the rescue emergency and whatever else there is that this great country, the United States of America has at its disposal, if you can't get up a road to deliver supplies, vitally needed for people to live, why couldn't you airlift them in or do something else? Why was that situation so inadequately addressed and why is it still so inadequately addressed?

Mr. LONG. First of all, ma'am, with all due respect, I believe we live in the greatest country on the globe. The amount of resources—

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. I never suggested we didn't sir.

Mr. LONG [continuing]. That, well, yes, but the amount of resources that the Federal Government put down, the amount of resources the State governments, the lengths to which our Government goes to help disaster victims can always be improved. But it is unmatched. It is second to none in any other country on the globe. We put people in hotels—

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you, sir.

Mr. LONG [continuing]. For months.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. You know what? I don't need you to make excuse. I need to tell you me why you failed there?

Mr. LONG. We haven't failed, ma'am.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Yes, you did.

Mr. LONG. No, we did not. The bottom line is my agency made a Herculean effort to put food and water in every area and it is more complex than—it is not going to move as fast. When you are talking about island jurisdictions—

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. OK.

Mr. LONG [continuing]. And the airport systems are completely blown out, the ports are completely blown out, I don't own the cranes. I don't own the airports. We have to rebuild airports. We move rapidly.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Right. But you have collaborative capacity and that collaborative capacity did not serve the citizens of Puerto Rico well. So my concern, it is not just you, sir. It is why did the United States of America, with all of its vast resources not do its very best for people who are indeed our people?

With that I yield back.

Chairman McCAUL. The administrator has very limited time, so I am going to recognize the three, but if you could keep your questions within a short period of time it would be very much appreciated.

Ms. González-Colón.

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to first of all thank the people from the Army Corps of Engineers and the people from FEMA for all their hard work they have been doing on the island. We acknowledge that, although we still know that there is a lot to do still.

I want to thank you for your being always available for calls, for meetings with mayors and for all the people in the island. I really do that personally because I have been calling you mostly every day to ask you about different issues.

My first question will be what resources will be necessary to you to finish the work in 30 days? I am talking to the Corps of Engineers in terms of the restoration of the power.

General JACKSON. Ma'am, we have the materials that we need to finish that that are on order and they are either in transit or they are on the island right now ready for distribution to contractors. So and they will be continuing to flow onto the island until the end of April.

So until we get everything on the ground, I mean, it is a physics problem. It is everything had to come off production lines. We had to special order materiel to meet the unique specifications of the power grid.

So, you know, we have enough linemen on the ground to do the work that needs to be done. It is just a matter of them working through and energizing the lines and getting the pieces and parts put back together. So there are really no other resources that we need that I can think of.

Everything that we have asked for that we have needed to do this mission we have been provided. So it is just a matter of the physics of putting together a very complicated system that is going to take us some time to finish.

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN. My concern with that is that you are downsizing the group of the crew of your private contractors on the island. One is going to be gone from the island the 19th of March and the other one is 7th of April. So that means that the resources are not going to be there to help us out to finish the last mile of the process.

So how the island is going to feel that their issues are going to be solved in terms of the connection of those center part of the island when you are downsizing the Army Corps presence to those areas? That is my main concern.

It doesn't say that PREPA is going to take charge of that because it will take a month or a month and a half for them to do the contracting process with the memorandum of understanding with other utilities in the States.

General JACKSON. Ma'am, the, you know, when we originally asked to do this there were no mutual assistance workers available. Now there are almost 1,000 mutual assistance workers.

I know the numbers go up and down based upon how they get recalled back to their State, but Mr. Torres and the team, the unified command group, look at the numbers of line workers that are required to do the missions based upon what is left to be completed. They look at that every single day, and there are decisions that are made.

FEMA, the government of Puerto Rico, and the Corps of Engineers are all involved with meet and making. They could be that, you know, the one company that we have that is going to be done in April maybe they get extended a little bit longer.

We are looking at all those things every single day to make sure that the progress of the work that we have in front of us to finish is not impacted at all by a lack of people. There is no lack of people.

Even though we are downsizing the contract, the big contracts that we awarded in October, it is only because the numbers that

we have there aren't needed anymore, and they have been replaced by mutual assistance workers who should have been there in the first place.

So that is not—the changing of who is doing the work is not impacting our ability to get the overall grid restored as fast as we can get it restored.

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN. I just urge you to reconsider the downsizing of the Army Corps on the island. I do think that we don't have enough personnel to do that kind of work, and it will take longer to the recovery processes in those areas just because of the downsizing.

I do recommend extending the current contracts until the time that PREPA or the mutual alliance linemen will be arriving on the island. Remember that weeks ago with the winter storm just took away 68 of those linemen to New York and Pennsylvania. So we can't continue to be waiting for personnel to arrive on the island.

General JACKSON. Ma'am, we are not waiting. We have—everybody is there. It just should be—they are going to be different people. It is some cases it is the same subcontractors that are working for different contractors.

So you know, PREPA has about 2,200 line workers on the ground now, which includes, I mean, their own organic work force and three other subcontractors that are doing work.

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN. Thank you, Mr. Jackson.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentlelady's time has expired.

I just for the last two Members, we are about 20 minutes past the administrator's hard stop, so if you could keep your time at a minimum.

Ms. Velázquez is recognized.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. I will make it simple, Mr. Chairman.

If I could send you, Mr. Long, some of my questions so that you can send them, your answers to my office?

General Jackson, I hear what you are saying to the Congresslady from Puerto Rico, the gentlelady from Puerto Rico. You are downsizing and you are allowing for PREPA to continue to do the work with some of the subcontractors that they have.

Do you think that will—PREPA, given the conditions of PREPA itself, should that provide any comfort to the people of Yabucoa, my hometown, where Hurricane Maria made landfall and to this day they have no electricity?

General JACKSON. Congresswoman, as we discussed yesterday, I am confident only because the experts that are making the decisions on how we determine how we apportion the work force are fully confident that based upon demonstrated capability that the line workers that are there, both from PREPA's organic work force and from the subcontractors that they have, are more than capable of doing the work and are continuing to demonstrate their ability to do that. Those are the—

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. I am worried. Why is that, that being the town that where Maria made landfall, that 6 months later, what is it about Yabucoa?

General JACKSON. Congresswoman, I think Yabucoa's biggest problem is it was the point of impact and it had sustained the greatest damage and so the most work is being done right there.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. I have been there four times. I never saw any crew until just my last visit.

In any case, General Jackson, I really want to thank you for getting back to me yesterday in our telephone call where I raised some of the issues of the people of Vieques are facing today. My question to you is regarding Puerto Rico's preparedness for the upcoming hurricane season, particularly in the area of energy.

It seems to me that no matter how much money we put into the reconstruction of the grid, unless we ensure the entire grid is strengthened to withstand Category 4/5, are just throwing money away. Can you comment on the repair work being done so far?

General JACKSON. Congresswoman, I would be glad to do that. I mean, the mission that we were given was to restore the power and get people the light back on as fast as possible. So that is what we are doing.

What you are describing is a more long-term goal that we are working on it. We are working as part of FEMA's team, as part of the Governor's team, to help the Governor develop a long-term recovery strategy, which is going to take into account all the things that you discussed, which would be things like taking the power generation capabilities, making them more modernized, putting them more closer to where the population centers are, which allows us to more economically bury lines where now, as Administrator Long talked about, these lines crisscross the island.

That is what the power distribution transmission system is based upon. So that is in the works right now and that will be presented to the administration sometime at the end of the summer.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Thank you.

Mr. Kelly, this week Puerto Rico is effectively pursuing a policy that will weaken the Puerto Rico Energy Commission, an effort that will severely undermine generally accepted regulatory and accountability practices. As the inspector general, can you provide us some detail in the importance of oversight of Government and institution—if this type of entity is weakened, how do we ensure good stewardship of taxpayers' funds?

Mr. KELLY. Ma'am, that is going to be very difficult to do. If you reduce oversight, especially on an organization that has known risks, that is a recipe for disaster.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Thank you.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Chair recognizes Ms. Plaskett.

Ms. PLASKETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you Ranking Member for this. I am going to have as well try and bring a bunch of questions in writing which I hope that you will respond to as quickly as possible. I know that bureaucracy can take some time, but the faster these answers come back to us the better I think for everyone.

Administrator Long, one of the things that I brought up in the opening statement, and I am hoping you can give me some definition for, is who is responsible and what is the time line for the modular units that are going to the schools as well as to the hospitals in the Virgin Islands?

Mr. LONG. So ultimately, in my opinion, the Governor, you know, of the Virgin Islands, Governor Mapp, is responsible. It is my job to make sure that he has the mechanisms and the funding to do so, and we are working very closely with him. But what I would be happy to respond in writing—

Ms. PLASKETT. I would appreciate that.

Mr. LONG [continuing]. About the whole entire process.

Ms. PLASKETT. Because it seems like a circular discussion. Department of Education says they are waiting for FEMA. FEMA says they are waiting for this, and so the people want to know who it is. So I—

Mr. LONG. Absolutely.

Ms. PLASKETT [continuing]. Appreciate that. In terms of the discussion about full Federal cost share, you have received the request. I know the White House has received the request. Do we know when there will be an answer as to whether or not the Virgin Islands will receive an extension of time for full cost share for debris removal?

Mr. LONG. I do not know. Obviously I don't control the White House, but I can obviously reach out to them as well to see where we are in queue.

Ms. PLASKETT. I wanted to know if you were aware, however, that under the Insular Area Acts, all Federal agencies have the discretion to waive local match for insular areas, defined to include the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico for Federal funding programs. Has FEMA sought to exercise this express statutory discretion to waive the local match for all disaster funding for the U.S. Virgin Islands?

Mr. LONG. I believe that that is a request that has got to come in from the Governor, and I am not sure that we have received any request to do so. If so, I will go back and check.

Ms. PLASKETT. OK. The reason I am asking this is, of course, that, you know, the insular areas have long had underfunding and under inclusion across a litany of programs. When you are facing a disaster such as this, that kind of express statutory discretion that you have would seem to be the appropriate time to do so.

You know, this is, again, what you just said was something that, again, I brought up on my opening statement is that you are waiting for a request from Governor Mapp. Oftentimes I am not sure if Governors and other individuals in these areas know that they can make these specific requests.

The tension between FEMA and the local agencies are such that you wonder, you know, are Governors spending money on having outside consultants come and consult them about what is he supposed to be requesting? It seems that it is not the most efficient use of funding.

Mr. LONG. Congresswoman, so, you know, my approach is in my FCOs who play an incredibly important role, I have asked them and in their training, their sole purpose is to go out and say Governor, this is what you are entitled to.

Ms. PLASKETT. Uh-huh.

Mr. LONG. This is—based on this event. If they are not doing that, then that is on me. I can go back and check.

Ms. PLASKETT. Right.

Mr. LONG. But we never hold back things. It is our job to administer the Stafford Act and the policies that are out there. We have no reason to hold anything back. FEMA is not the enemy of a Governor or of the disaster survivor.

Ms. PLASKETT. Well, under FEMA, just that last question and when you mentioned the Stafford Act, what is your position and would you support an extension of Stafford Act language so that it is not only bringing resilience to those things that are considered emergency, which is defined as power, water, communications, and education?

But would also extend to other public assistance projects such as roads and public housing?

Mr. LONG. I am not sure I understand the question because we do fix roads and we—

Ms. PLASKETT. No, no, no. So what I am asking—

Mr. LONG [continuing]. Put in housing under emergency provision.

Ms. PLASKETT. An amendment to the Stafford Act which would provide for embedding resilience, the resilience that you are now going to bring to areas such as power and water and communications—

Mr. LONG. Right.

Ms. PLASKETT [continuing]. Does not extend necessarily to public roads and public housing.

Mr. LONG. Right.

Ms. PLASKETT. Would you be in favor of or supportive of an amendment that addresses that in the Stafford Act to bring that as well?

Mr. LONG. Well, I am all—

Ms. PLASKETT. I will yield back.

Mr. LONG [continuing]. For resilience. Let me be honest. I am all for resilience because I want to reduce the job. I mean, we need to work FEMA out of a job over, you know, through resilience and mitigation.

I believe that the 428 program, which is something that is on the table with the Governor as well, allows for more alternative projects and resilience projects to be built in. The Stafford Act may allow us to do that for the roadway systems, but that is a conversation that we can have off-line as well if you would like, and I can explain that.

Chairman MCCAUL. All right. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAUL. I want to thank the witnesses.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I would like to put three questions on the record for Mr. Brock Long to hear.

Chairman MCCAUL. OK.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I am going to ask for unanimous consent.

Mr. Brock, for as it relates to Houston and Texas, answer directly to me in writing and by phone on the FEMA denials and whether or not you will automatically extend those who are in the hotels, the importance of working with local government.

That is difficult. I know that by the Stafford Act you work with the State, but the local governments are really on the ground working with the day-to-day complaints.

Then I think one of the solutions to these large contracts that you have that have not been helpful to us is contracting with local entities. Sometimes the entire region is not devastated. There are local contractors that can do a very important job, housing, food services, obviously debris we know about that, but I think it is important for FEMA to look—counseling, case work can be done by local entities.

I would like to reach back to you on those quests. Thank you for having your staff be at my meeting on March 5.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you. Thank you. I want to thank the witnesses for your patience. I know this went well over schedule, but you stood by and answered all of our questions. I appreciate that very much.

I would just like also to say that Major General Jackson I look forward to working with you on the reservoir project.

To Administrator Long, the first bill I got passed in the Congress was a FEMA reform bill after Katrina. So I think there will be some great lessons learned from this, things that we can work together to make it more streamlined, effective, and efficient.

I want to thank you and commend you for the job that you are doing right now.

Mr. LONG. Thank you, sir.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you.

Mr. LONG. Thank you.

Chairman MCCAUL. We are going to take a brief break and the second panel will be joining us.

[Recess.]

Chairman MCCAUL. Yes. We are pleased to welcome our second panel of witnesses. Thanks for your patience. I know it is getting late. I think we have got a subcommittee hearing at 2 here.

Our second panel includes Mr. Reed Clay, chief operating officer of the Office of the Governor, State of Texas, great State of Texas; Mr. Wesley Maul, director of Division of Emergency Management for the State of Florida; and finally the Honorable Josephine Meléndez-Ortiz, vice chairman of the Committee on Federal and International Relations and Status for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and Ms. Jeanne-Aimee De Marrais, senior director of Save the Children. Thank you all for being here today.

I guess we will start with Mr. Clay.

**STATEMENT OF REED CLAY, CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER,
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR, STATE OF TEXAS**

Mr. CLAY. Good afternoon. Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, and distinguished Members of the committee, thank you for holding this important hearing and for the opportunity to share lessons that we have learned from Hurricane Harvey in Texas.

Let me quickly offer three key messages. The first is thank you for your partnership. Governor Abbott and the State of Texas are grateful for the strong partnership that we have shared with our Federal counterparts to date.

President Donald Trump, Vice President Pence, multiple members of the President's Cabinet, and FEMA Administrator Brock

Long showed their commitment to Texas even before the storm made landfall. They pledged their full resources and continue to show their commitment to the State to this day.

Of course, Congress, too, deserves our deepest gratitude. Within days of Harvey's dissipation, as Texans had only begun to understand the magnitude of devastation, Congress moved quickly to appropriate needed financial assistance to quickly begin the rebuilding process.

That hard work continued in the passage of additional appropriation bills that will help Texas recover and rebuild.

I wouldn't be a proud Texan if I didn't pay particular thanks to the Texas delegation, Chairman McCaul, Congresswoman Jackson Lee, and the entire Texas delegation have been true champions for their constituents and for all Texans. Thank you.

Next, let me share a couple lessons we have learned. The first lesson is that disaster recovery could be substantially improved by drastically cutting regulations and red tape at all levels of government. When it comes to disaster response, we must be outcome-focused, not process-oriented. Rest assured Texas has done its part.

Governor Abbott has used his emergency authorities to waive hundreds of regulations, employing a similar outlook, Commissioner John Sharp, who leads the Governor's Commission to Rebuild Texas, has consistently found ways to push past bureaucratic barriers.

But there's more to do. Beginning next week, the Commission to Rebuild Texas and the Texas Department of Emergency Management will hold a series of workshops to develop lessons learned and to focus on how best to restore, redevelop, and rebuild a more resilient Texas.

These listen-and-learn sessions will inform a comprehensive report delivered by the commission outlining changes that the State must make. But Federal regulations also pose a problem. Because disaster recovery is administered across multiple agencies, amid multiple layers of government, recovery is saddled by a redundancy of government.

The Federal Government has opportunities to simplify the process and it must be streamlined. Too often, individuals are passed between several agencies with different paperwork and different rules.

Disaster response and recovery, as Administrator Long said earlier, is best when executed at a local level, but under the current process local governments are buried under layers of government regulations. Disaster response and recovery cannot truly be executed at the local level if it is micromanaged in Washington.

The second lesson is that we must rebuild Texas stronger. We now know Harvey was the biggest tropical cyclone rainfall event in U.S. history. Peak rainfall measured over 60 inches, with much of the area receiving more than 3 feet.

The amount of rain was literally off the charts. This was not a 100-year flood or a 500-year flood. This was a 1,000-year flood. It was so much rain that the National Weather Service added additional colors to their rainfall charts to show just how much rain was falling in Texas.

Not surprisingly then, Harvey is already the second-costliest storm in U.S. history. The National Hurricane Center estimates more than \$125 billion in losses. It is reported that only \$30 billion of that is insured, meaning Harvey will be by far the largest uninsured loss of 2017.

If Harvey teaches anything it is surely that we must invest now to mitigate against losses from future storms that history tells us will happen again and again and again.

Texas is already deploying hazard mitigation funds made available under the Stafford Act to undertake valuable mitigation projects through the affected region. The Governor today will be in Houston announcing the first three projects later today.

But many of the projects need to truly future-proof the affected area will require further Federal assistance. Much of the damage in the affected areas could have been prevented or mitigated by Federal projects that have been considered for years or in some cases decades.

If there is only one lesson to be learned from Harvey it is this. We must rebuild stronger to future-proof our valuable assets—human, natural, and economic—from future disasters.

Let me close with this. The pace of recovery is never fast enough. If the numbers I cited above are any indication this will be Texas' longest and hardest rebuilding effort yet.

We are grateful for the strong partnership with our Federal partners thus far, but we also recognize that a recovery of this size will require the continued commitment of resources from our Federal partners for months to come. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Clay follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF REED CLAY

MARCH 15, 2018

Chairman McCaul, distinguished Members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to share with you lessons learned by the State of Texas in preparing for, responding to, and recovery from Hurricane Harvey. My name is Reed Clay, chief operating officer for Governor Greg Abbott.

HISTORIC STORM

More than 6 months since Hurricane Harvey first made landfall as a Category 4 storm near Rockport, Texas, at about 10 p.m. on Aug. 25, 2017, we now know from the National Hurricane Center that Harvey was “the most significant tropical cyclone rainfall event in United States history, both in scope and peak rainfall amounts.” The storm impacted nearly 50,000 square miles of Texas; some 57 tornadoes were spawned; and record-breaking rainfall of over 60 inches was recorded in Nederland and in Groves, Texas. The previous record in the continental United States of 48 inches was also broken in communities throughout the Coastal Bend Region and in Houston, with many areas deluged by historic flooding. As a result, nearly 1.4 million Texans likely evacuated from their homes. More than 35,000 rescues were recorded. More than 42,000 Texans sought refuge in 258 official shelters. Nearly 300,000 households were left without power. And tragically, it is estimated that 68 people died, making Harvey the deadliest hurricane to hit Texas in nearly 100 years. But we also know that no force of nature is more powerful than Texans helping Texans, and Americans helping Americans. We are grateful so many lives were spared, and inspired by the resilience of the people of Texas, our commitment to help families recover and communities rebuild is stronger than ever.

ADVANCE ACTIONS

This disaster was unprecedented in recent history, as was the aggressive advance action and coordination of Federal, State, and local emergency management re-

sources and personnel in the 53 Texas counties in the Presidential Disaster Declaration and 60 Texas counties in the State Disaster Declaration. We are grateful for the swift action taken and the continuing support offered by the President, Vice President, Cabinet members, Congressional Members, and all of our Federal partners.

Harvey left little time for the State of Texas to prepare, but we believe actions taken before, during, and after Harvey to this very day as rebuilding continues, serve as a model going forward for the Nation. Let me provide a snapshot of advance actions taken in preparation for the storm and to save lives.

- On Aug. 23, 2017, 3 days in advance of then-Tropical Depression Harvey's projected arrival, Governor Greg Abbott ordered the multi-agency State Operations Center (SOC) to elevate its readiness level, and directed State agencies to make available any and all State resources to assist in preparation, rescue, and recovery. The Governor pre-emptively issued a State Disaster Declaration for 30 counties most at risk of the anticipated storm, activated the Texas National Guard and Texas State Guard, and asked Texans to heed all local warnings.
- On Aug. 24, 2017, Harvey was upgraded to a Tropical Storm. Governor Abbott discussed hurricane preparedness and the importance of local evacuation warnings with Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Elaine Duke and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Administrator Brock Long. President Donald Trump called Governor Abbott and pledged all available Federal resources. The Governor again urged all Texans to heed local officials' warnings, strongly consider voluntary evacuation orders, and strictly comply with all mandatory evacuation orders.
- On Aug. 25, 2017, following a briefing by the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) and all activated State agencies at the State Operations Center (SOC), Governor Abbott held a press conference where he again urged all Texans to heed local officials' warnings, strongly consider voluntary evacuation orders, and strictly comply with all mandatory evacuation orders. Governor Abbott requested a Presidential Disaster Declaration in advance for 6 counties to more rapidly secure Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts. The Governor then visited Texans seeking refuge at a San Antonio shelter, and suspended State and local hotel and motel occupancy tax for relief personnel and victims of the storm. Hurricane Harvey made landfall at 10 p.m. near Rockport as a Category 4 hurricane.

RESCUE, RECOVERY, AND REBUILDING

Immediately following landfall, coordinated rescue, recovery, and rebuilding efforts began. With the support of our Federal partners, here is a snapshot of actions taken by the State of Texas the first 33 days after landfall.

- On Aug. 26, 2017, Governor Abbott contacted local officials in the region by phone to hear damage estimates first-hand and to offer support. The Governor began receiving formal daily briefings from the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) and FEMA, provided a media update at the State Operations Center (SOC), and added 20 Texas counties to the State Disaster Declaration. Following multiple media interviews and while receiving reports from the region on rescue and recovery operations, Governor Abbott and First Lady Cecilia Abbott visited an Austin Red Cross Shelter where they helped serve dinner.
- On Aug. 27, 2017, following the daily State Operations Center (SOC) briefing and based on continuing updates from the region, Governor Abbott requested 12 Texas counties be added to the Presidential Disaster Declaration, and he added 4 to the State Disaster Declaration. Governor Abbott requested of Secretary of Defense General James Mattis that a Texas National Guard Dual Status Command be established to allow for a single commander of both Federal and State forces providing disaster response. The Governor was joined by U.S. Coast Guard Vice Admiral Karl Schultz and agency officials at SOC for a media update on on-going rescue and recovery operations.
- On Aug. 28, 2017, Governor Abbott activated the entire Texas National Guard, added another four counties to the State Disaster Declaration, and issued a proclamation allowing public utilities to access private property as needed to repair power lines and reconnect the electric utility grid. The Governor visited the Coastal Bend Region for an on-site briefing and provided what became a daily media update. After an aerial tour of the region to survey the extensive damage, the Governor spoke with local officials and Texans impacted by the storm. He was joined on the ground by Senator John Cornyn and FEMA Administrator Long. At the Governor's direction to State agencies to extend deadlines, waive

- fees, and cut red tape, the Texas Department of Public Safety began providing a free replacement driver's license or ID card for survivors.
- On Aug. 29, 2017, Governor Abbott joined President Trump and Cabinet members in Corpus Christi to meet with local leaders and relief organizations before traveling to Austin for a detailed briefing at the State Operations Center (SOC). They were joined by Federal and State officials, including Senators John Cornyn and Ted Cruz. Governor Abbott reminded residents of Houston threatened by rising floodwaters that preserving life remained the top priority. The Governor announced an award of \$25 million in Federal funds to the Texas Department of Transportation for debris removal, clean-up, and transportation infrastructure repairs.
 - On Aug. 30, 2017, Governor Abbott requested the addition of 14 Texas counties to the Presidential Disaster Declaration.
 - On Aug. 31, 2017, Governor Abbott sent a letter to county judges outlining available assistance, and he increased the number of National Guard troops helping with hurricane response to 24,000. The Governor suspended vehicle registration, titling, and inspection rules for hurricane victims, and he eased restrictions on truckers bringing fuel and relief supplies into the State. Governor Abbott and Texas First Lady Cecilia Abbott joined Vice President Mike Pence and Second Lady of the United States Karen Pence on a visit to Rockport and Victoria to meet with victims, volunteers, and first responders. The Governor proclaimed Sept. 3, 2017, as a Day of Prayer in Texas; then Governor Abbott and Vice President Pence assisted with debris clearing in Rockport.
 - On Sept. 1, 2017, Governor Abbott announced that Gulf Coast refineries were coming back on-line, that Louisiana, Oklahoma, and New Mexico were shipping gas into Texas, and that a pipeline carrying gasoline to Oklahoma had been reversed, keeping the fuel in the State, as the Port of Corpus Christi also opened for barges loaded with fuel. President Trump authorized an increase in Federal funds for debris removal and emergency protective measures, increasing the Federal cost-share from 75 percent to 90 percent. Governor Abbott announced the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation in collaboration with the OneStar Foundation was forming the Rebuild Texas Fund. The Governor requested three more Texas counties be added to the Presidential Disaster Declaration, and he issued a proclamation warning against price gouging.
 - On Sept. 2, 2017, Governor Abbott and Texas First Lady Cecilia Abbott greeted President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump in Houston for a briefing and visit with resilient victims, emergency responders, and volunteers. The Governor and the President met with Texans taking refuge at NRG Stadium where they also helped serve meals. Governor Abbott and President Trump also visited the First Church of Pearland, which was serving as a hurricane relief center for victims of the storm. Members of the President's Cabinet, Senator Cruz, and Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner joined them for the day.
 - On Sept. 3, 2017, Governor Abbott joined in the National and Texas Day of Prayer for victims of Hurricane Harvey at Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin. Governor Abbott met with Senator John Cornyn, Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, and Chairman Michael McCaul at the SOC to discuss the Congressional response to the costliest disaster to ever hit Texas.
 - On Sept. 4, 2017, Governor Abbott announced FEMA had approved his request for Community Disaster Loan assistance to help cities maintain operating budgets and provide essential services. The Governor requested seven Texas counties be added to the Presidential Disaster Declaration.
 - On Sept. 5, 2017, Governor Abbott visited the communities of Wharton and Beaumont to thank local officials for their tireless efforts on behalf of their citizens.
 - On Sept. 6, 2017, Governor Abbott thanked the U.S. House of Representatives for voting to allocate \$7.85 billion as an initial down payment to Texas in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey. The Governor suspended the State's waiting period for auto claims payments to hurricane victims.
 - On Sept. 7, 2017, Governor Abbott announced the Governor's Commission to Rebuild Texas, and appointed Texas A&M University System Chancellor John Sharp as commissioner. The Governor charged the Commission with efficiently and effectively bringing the resources of all State agencies together to help communities in assessing their needs, and in navigating State and Federal resources for the rebuilding of roads, bridges, schools, and government buildings. The Governor directed the Texas Workforce Commission, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and Texas Education Agency (TEA), to develop an education and workforce training plan to support the rebuilding of communities and to put Texans back to work. Governor Abbott, Commissioner Sharp, and

State agency heads met with local officials in Corpus Christi and Richmond. The Governor announced aerial spraying for mosquitoes would begin with added assistance from the U.S. Air Force Reserve and specially-equipped cargo planes.

- On Sept. 8, 2017, Governor Abbott, Commissioner Sharp, and State agency heads met with local officials in Houston and Victoria. Governor Abbott thanked Congress for passing and the President for immediately signing a \$15.3 billion disaster relief package for several States. The Governor announced a Texas Education Agency hotline with public education updates for parents, and he announced the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) had completed the initial assessments of all 60 Superfund sites in the area.
- On Sept. 9, 2017, Governor Abbott, Commissioner Sharp, and State agency heads met with local officials in Beaumont. The Governor sent a letter to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt expressing his support for a Texas Water Development Board request to streamline Federal funding for flood and water infrastructure projects.
- On Sept. 11, 2017, Governor Abbott announced the Texas Health and Human Services Commission would begin offering D-SNAP disaster food relief for hurricane survivors.
- On Sept. 12, 2017, Governor Abbott proclaimed Sept. 12 as “Hand In Hand Day” in Texas to promote the telethon featuring George Strait, Miranda Lambert, Lyle Lovett, Robert Earl Keen, Chris Stapleton, and other artists. At the Governor’s direction to State agencies to extend deadlines, waive fees, and cut red tape, the State began waiving the fee for replacement copies of birth certificates for hurricane survivors.
- On Sept. 13, 2017, Governor Abbott announced a \$30 million Federal grant to the Texas Workforce Commission to create temporary jobs to assist with clean-up, recovery, and humanitarian efforts. The Governor announced the launch of RebuildTexas.Today, a real-time resource for local officials with information on State and Federal assistance available for infrastructure rebuilding. The Governor suspended the State’s 7-day waiting period for disaster unemployment insurance.
- On Sept. 14, 2017, Governor Abbott announced Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) crews, having already reopened roads for emergency responders, replaced signage, reactivated signals, and resumed ferry service, was now removing roadside debris in the region. Governor Abbott announced that Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush would head the State’s short- and long-term housing recovery efforts that were to be locally-led, State-supported, and Federally-funded. The Governor added two Texas counties to the State Disaster Declaration.
- On Sept. 15, 2017, Governor Abbott released the first issue of the on-going Update from the Commission to Rebuild Texas, with recovery reports from State and Federal agencies, and local communities.
- On Sept. 19, 2017, Governor Abbott suspended State trucking regulations to aid Hurricane Irma relief in Florida.
- On Sept. 20, 2017, Governor Abbott sent a letter to county judges encouraging the utilization of disaster relief funding for their communities. Governor Abbott extended the State Disaster Declaration for now 60 Texas counties. The Governor announced the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) had removed approximately 432,000 cubic feet, or 8 football fields, of debris from roadways in addition to local efforts to remove debris as quickly as possible. The Governor joined Attorney General Ken Paxton in a letter to President Trump, urging him to ensure that churches and religious organizations are treated equally with other nonprofits and not excluded from FEMA disaster funding.
- On Sept. 21, 2017, Governor Abbott joined George Strait and Acting DHS Secretary Duke in Rockport to reaffirm his commitment to help Texans rebuild even stronger than before.
- On Sept. 22, 2017, Governor Abbott was joined by HUD Secretary Ben Carson and Commissioner Bush in a tour of impacted housing developments in Port Arthur where they spoke with survivors of the storm.
- On Sept. 26, 2017, Governor Abbott, Lt. Governor Dan Patrick, and Commissioner Sharp joined Texas State legislators at the FEMA Joint Field Office in Austin for a briefing.
- On Sept. 27, 2017, Governor Abbott announced TxDOT had now collected more than 2.4 million cubic feet, or 45 football fields, of debris left behind by Hurricane Harvey on roadways across the 4 districts hardest hit by the storm.

- On Sept. 29, 2017, as a critical milestone, Governor Abbott announced all but 3 public school districts had returned to class. The Governor traveled to Houston to present a \$50 million check for urgent debris removal to Mayor Turner.

ECONOMIC LOSS/DAMAGE ESTIMATES

The enormity of Harvey’s destruction has now been revealed. The National Hurricane Center estimates that Harvey is the second-costliest storm in U.S. history, and by far the costliest storm in Texas’ history, at \$125 billion in damages or more. The Insurance Journal estimates that Texans suffered in excess of \$70 billion of uninsured loss. Nearly 900,000 applications for Individual Assistance, and nearly 1,200 requests for Public Assistance from jurisdictions, have been received by FEMA. And communities in the impacted region have requested more than \$61 billion in expedited Federal funding for public infrastructure repairs and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects that could mitigate the potential for future storm damage.

STATE EXPENSES

Current best estimates show that the State and local governments will incur approximately \$2.72 billion in obligations. State funds spent or allocated for rescue, recovery, and rebuilding include: \$438 million for repair of our public schools; \$90 million to cover local jurisdictions’ cost-share for debris removal of approximately 16 million cubic yards; \$38 million for immediate housing needs; and due to property value declines, Texas school districts stand to suffer up to a \$1 billion loss in the local property taxes that fund our school finance system.

	Amount
State Agency Actuals as of Jan 2018	\$421,225,019
State Agency Projected for remainder of fiscal year 2018	747,100,000
Texas Education Agency Estimates for fiscal year 2018–19	438,000,000
School finance estimated State increase due to local property value loss for fiscal year 2020	1,000,000,000
Transfer to General Land Office for housing programs	38,600,000
Remainder of \$90 million made available to local governments for debris removal match	77,000,000
TOTAL	\$2,721,925,019

FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

As of March 9, 2018, more than \$13.3 billion in Federal funds have been provided directly to Texans, including FEMA grants to households, National Flood Insurance Program claims payments, and SBA disaster loans; and more than \$362 million in Public Assistance funding from FEMA for State and local governments has been obligated. Additionally, Congress has appropriated over \$100 billion toward hurricane relief and recovery. A portion of that money will be allocated to Texas for housing recovery, infrastructure, mitigation, and numerous other needs.

HOUSING

As of March 12, 2018, repairs have been completed on 8,356 homes through the Partial Repair and Essential Power for Sheltering (PREPS) program, and nearly 8,000 homes are in the process of receiving repairs. Sixty-nine homes have completed repairs through the Direct Assistance for Limited Home Repair (DALHR) program, with 538 additional applicants. Some 2,263 families have been housed through the Direct Housing Program, receiving temporary housing units such as a manufactured housing unit, a travel trailer, or Direct Lease; additional housing options are being prepped for occupancy for an additional 2,621 applicants. And 7,249 households are taking advantage of FEMA’s Transitional Sheltering Assistance, staying in hotels or other accommodations while seeking longer-term housing solutions.

LESSONS LEARNED

Now more than 6 months after Hurricane Harvey made landfall, and as rebuilding efforts continue, much progress has been made through the outstanding coordination of teams at the Federal, State, and local levels. In each community, it was because of the courage and calm leadership of local emergency managers, elected officials, law enforcement, and first responders that so many lives were spared, and

that many of their citizens are on the long road to recovery—even as they too suffered personal loss. Our Federal partners have been responsive and innovative, including improvements to speed funding to impacted communities. In the early days after landfall of Hurricane Harvey, as the devastating damage became apparent, it was clear the affected jurisdictions would need assistance and need it quickly—both for debris removal (Category A) and to reimburse the massive emergency protective measures (Category B) that were deployed across 53 counties in the Presidential Disaster Declaration. As a result, FEMA and the State worked together to expedite payments for Public Assistance. These efforts pushed over \$290 million to locals in the first 30 days. And the work of the Governor’s Commission to Rebuild Texas in helping local communities navigate State and Federal resources for infrastructure rebuilding has also been commendable, as have the county extension agents who have served as a force extender for those efforts in the field. With lessons learned in terms of training needs at the local level, as well as technology improvements made to track response and recovery efforts, this Commission is a model that could be replicated in future disasters. However, even as all State agency resources were leveraged, and our partnership with Federal agencies is strong, there is much room for improvement at all levels of government to meet our ultimate goal of helping Texas families and communities to recover from a devastating storm of historic proportions.

Obstacle: Bureaucratic Delays

The disaster recovery apparatus is saddled by redundancy of Government. Disaster relief is administered across multiple agencies amongst multiple layers of Government. The complexity related to the coordination of the numerous Federal programs (FEMA, HUD, SBA, USDA, etc.) is challenging at best for individuals and communities that must apply and qualify for assistance from these numerous programs. Most often an individual or entity is required to apply for multiple sources of assistance, with each program requiring new applications containing much of the same information. The individual or entity also must navigate the maze of qualifying for and receiving assistance from the source of prime responsibility before they can qualify for assistance under other programs. This is very confusing, cumbersome, and complicated. This results in some individuals or entities ultimately not receiving the assistance they rightly qualify for because they fail to properly navigate this bureaucratic labyrinth.

Recommendation: Streamline and speed immediate relief for individuals.

The complexity of the sequence of delivery for Individual Assistance (IA) through FEMA must be remedied. Even within the centralized Disaster Recovery Centers, already traumatized survivors must navigate a confusing gauntlet of Federal agencies, State agencies, and relief organizations. And multiple organizations send multiple inspectors to the same property, then debate and delay the actual delivery of services because everyone wants to be the payer of last resort. Families would recover faster if FEMA would develop a tiered IA structure that delivers grant funds to families based on damage assessments regardless of who else might be supporting the survivors. This needs to be regardless of insurance status.

Recommendation: Cut red tape at all levels.

Some jurisdictions encountered challenges in quickly procuring needed support services, while many others discovered that the contracts they had in advance of the storm did not include all of the contract provisions required under the governing Federal laws and/or rules. Many of these required Federal provisions seem to be onerous, such as the prohibition to use interlocal agreements to allow contracts procured by one jurisdiction (i.e. the county) to be used to perform work for another jurisdiction (i.e. a city). This is common practice under State procurement laws, but prohibited by Federal laws governing disaster response. This prohibition greatly reduces the options available to local jurisdictions to quickly and efficiently respond to their needs. Additionally, confusion as to what is required for Public Assistance (PA) funding was problematic. Due to this inconsistency, local auditors, finance directors, and emergency managers operated under a cloud of anxiety. The lack of a true and cohesive checklist detailing the documentation requirements can greatly affect a jurisdiction’s Public Assistance funding.

Cutting red tape works. For example, in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, Governor Abbott used the authority provided to him in Texas Govt. Code section 418 to suspend hundreds of regulatory statutes and State agency rules that would in any way prevent, hinder, or delay necessary action in coping with the disaster. The suspended regulations/rules fall under the authority of more than 30 State agencies and cover a variety of topics including peace officers, vehicle storage facilities, professional license renewal, animal health, and many more. (A complete list is avail-

able on request.) The removal of the regulations allowed for State and local entities to focus on the goal of picking up the people of Texas, rather than on complying with procedures and process.

Obstacle: Housing Delays

The loss of family homes and family memories, and the sense of security those bring, was deeply devastating for many Texans. Given the enormity of the potential housing project in Texas, and the likelihood that FEMA would be spread too thin to manage responses to three separate storms concurrently, Texas agreed to take the primary role in delivering temporary housing. A cooperative federalism of this sort has the potential to radically transform the way housing is delivered. In its best form, the Federal Government can provide tremendous financial assistance to those whose lives have been devastated by the storm, while permitting States to provide solutions that satisfy the unique geographical, legal, and even political concerns of their State. But such a method will only work if the insertion of the State into the implementation of the temporary housing programs does not simply insert an additional layer of process and procedure. In some places, the temporary housing program has been slowed by trying to coordinate procedures and ensure compliance at three different levels of government.

Recommendation: Streamline delivery; remove regulatory roadblocks.

Though still on-going, Texas learned two valuable lessons from its implementation of the temporary housing program. First, in order for the cooperation to work, States must truly be relieved of complying with the tangle of Federal regulations governing the temporary housing program. Indeed, it would seem that even FEMA—which continues to help implement the temporary housing program in some parts of the State—struggles to efficiently deliver housing solutions while complying with these regulations. And while the labyrinth of regulations and processes is long and tortuous, many of the rules themselves have the perverse effect of being both more costly and less effective. Second, Texas itself must do a better job of removing regulatory obstacles from the successful delivery of temporary housing solutions. The patchwork of codes and local ordinances that crisscross the State has made it extremely difficult to design a one-size-fits-all solution to immediate housing needs. Take for example, the RV and Manufactured Home solution—the most widely-used FEMA program. Many areas, such as the city of Houston, do not permit the installation of RVs or manufactured homes.

Obstacle: Debris Removal and Procurement

The faster debris is removed, the faster recovery begins. With an estimated 16 million cubic yards of debris generated by Hurricane Harvey, debris collection and removal was a huge issue early during the response and recovery phases, and to a certain extent continues today. We are thankful that the President rapidly authorized a 90 percent Federal cost share for debris removal, which helped alleviate some of these burdens, however on-the-ground problems ranged from insufficient resources to remove debris to a lack of disposal sites available in some areas to accept mixed debris. And many cities let a single contract for debris removal. At its best, this scenario provides no incentive for debris haulers to move quickly. At its worst, it provides a perverse incentive for price gouging and coercion. Opportunities exist to improve the debris collection and removal response through improved contracting practices, pre-approved collection and disposal sites, and prepositioning of critical assets.

Recommendation: Remove regulatory roadblocks.

Federal regulations have posed a problem for local jurisdictions as the requirements involve more stringent guidelines, as well as additional personnel and resources for already overwhelmed and understaffed departments. Jurisdictions struggle to implement the Federal guideline of full and open competition due to the extreme nature of the event. As these jurisdictions were responding to public safety and saving lives, the task of publishing solicitations, adjusting time lines, researching products and services, and prohibiting local preferences all took a secondary role in the response effort. Jurisdictions were forced to take time away from their efforts of managing the devastation to focus on Federal grant requirements, which were more stringent than local or State laws, regulation, or policy. Although many jurisdictions had prepared for disaster services by awarding pre-positioned contracts prior to the event, the jurisdictions found that these contracts were not compliant with Federal procurement regulations.

The three hurricanes in 2017 found many debris contractors leaving Texas (often without fulfilling their contract), assisting other States, returning to Texas, and then raising their agreed-upon contract prices with Texas jurisdictions. Under Fed-

eral guidelines, a cost change to an original contract would require a detailed cost analysis. Due to the unusual and unique circumstances of three devastating events affecting the United States, Texas jurisdictions were not only at the mercy of the debris contractors, but they were also under pressure to remove the debris quickly and expediently due to health and safety hazards. Conducting detailed cost and price analysis under such circumstances became a heavy burden on these jurisdictions.

FEMA could speed up recovery by removing regulations on private property and commercial property debris removal. It has been theorized that insurance should cover private and commercial properties, but since FEMA is the insurer under NFIP, by applying outdated regulations, all FEMA is doing is slowing the recovery process.

Economic Losses

As a result of Hurricane Harvey, nearly 1.4 million Texans likely evacuated from their homes, more than 35,000 rescues were recorded, more than 42,000 Texans sought refuge, and nearly 300,000 households were left without power. And tragically, it is estimated that 68 people died, making Harvey the deadliest hurricane to hit Texas in nearly 100 years. The event upended millions of Texans' lives. On top of this, Hurricane Harvey's economic impact was in the range of \$125 billion, according to the National Hurricane Center.

Recommendation: Prioritize mitigation projects.

Disaster recovery is a long and expensive process—and one that should be thought of both in terms of present and future need. Governor Abbott has made clear that we cannot simply repair the damage left behind by Hurricane Harvey—but that we must “future proof” for the next storm. Spending precious taxpayer dollars without consideration of future costs, both in terms of dollars and lives, is short-sighted and fiscally irresponsible. Texas has asked the Federal Government to provide assistance to ensure that Texas rebuilds stronger than ever after Hurricane Harvey, and it is our intention to be good stewards of those dollars both in terms of present and future need. Thanks to the hard work of the Texas Congressional delegation and Members of Congress, we are off to a good start toward “future-proofing.”

We can minimize the cost of future disasters by investing money now to mitigate damage in the future. For example, Texas is funding hazard mitigation projects in communities impacted by Hurricane Harvey through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). The funding from FEMA will provide an estimated \$1 billion for projects designed to both help Texas rebuild and reduce the risk of future damage from flooding and hurricanes. The HMGP is an example of a State-Federal partnership that targets financial resources toward local projects that will help “future proof” against the next storm.

ATTACHMENT

Historic Storm

- NATIONAL HURRICANE CENTER, “Tropical Cyclone Report, Hurricane Harvey,” Jan. 23, 2018. https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/data/tcr/AL092017_Harvey.pdf
 “Harvey started as a typical weak August tropical storm that affected the Lesser Antilles and dissipated over the central Caribbean Sea. However, after reforming over the Bay of Campeche, Harvey rapidly intensified into a category 4 hurricane (on the Saffir Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale) before making landfall along the middle Texas coast. The storm then stalled, with its center over or near the Texas coast for 4 days, dropping historic amounts of rainfall of more than 60 inches over southeastern Texas—Harvey was the most significant tropical cyclone rainfall event in United States history, both in scope and peak rainfall amounts, since reliable rainfall records began around the 1880's. The highest storm total rainfall report from Harvey was 60.58 inches near Nederland, Texas, with another report of 60.54 inches from near Groves, Texas. Both of these values (and from five other stations) exceed the previously accepted United States tropical cyclone storm total rainfall record of 52.00 inches at Kanaloahuluhulu Ranger Station, Hawaii, in August of 1950 from Hurricane Hiki.”

- @NWS, Aug. 28, 2017. <https://twitter.com/NWS/status/902174274571689984/photo/1>



Rescue, Recovery, and Rebuilding

- OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR, REPORT TO THE PEOPLE, “Steps to Recovery,” Jan. 29, 2018. A snapshot of action taken by the Governor; not inclusive of all briefings, hearings, proclamations, actions, or events in Texas. Begins on page 28: https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/press/2018ReportTOThePeople__01292018.pdf

Economic Loss / Damage

- NATIONAL HURRICANE CENTER, “Costliest U.S. tropical cyclones tables updated,” Jan. 26, 2018. Table 3b. Costliest mainland United States tropical cyclones, 1900–2017, after accounting for inflation to 2017 dollars. <https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/news/UpdatedCostliest.pdf>

RANK	TROPICAL CYCLONE	YEAR	CATEGORY	DAMAGE (U.S.)
1	KATRINA (SE FL, LA, MS)	2005	3	\$160,000,000,000
2	HARVEY (TX, LA)	2017	4	\$125,000,000,000
4	SANDY (Mid-Atlantic & NE US)	2012	1	70,200,000,000
5	IRMA (FL)	2017	4	50,000,000,000
6	ANDREW (SE FL/LA)	1992	5	47,790,000,000
7	IKE (TX, LA)	2008	2	34,800,000,000
8	IVAN (AL/NW FL)	2004	3	27,060,000,000
9	WILMA (S FL)	2005	3	24,320,000,000
10	RITA (SW LA, N TX)	2005	3	23,680,000,000

- INSURANCE JOURNAL, "Top 10 Global Economic Loss Events," Jan. 24, 2018. Insurance Journal estimates Harvey exceeded \$100 billion in economic loss; only \$30 billion was insured. <https://www.insurancejournal.com/news/international/2018/01/24/478246.htm>

Top 10 Global Economic Loss Events

Date(s)	Event	Location	Deaths	Economic Loss (USD)	Insured Loss (USD)
Aug. 25-Sept. 2	Hurricane Harvey	U.S.	90	~100 billion	~30 billion
Sept. 18-22	Hurricane Maria	Caribbean Islands	651	~65 billion	~27 billion
Sept. 4-12	Hurricane Irma	U.S., Caribbean Islands	134	~55 billion	~23 billion
October	Wildfires	United States	43	13 billion	11 billion

Chairman McCAUL. Thank you so much. Let me just say I think the Governor made us all Texas proud and strong, so thanks for your testimony.

The Chair now recognizes Mr. Maul for his testimony.

STATEMENT OF WESLEY MAUL, DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, STATE OF FLORIDA

Mr. MAUL. Thank you, sir. Good afternoon. At 9:10 a.m. on September 10, 2017, Hurricane Irma made landfall at Cudjoe Key as a Category 4 storm, becoming the first major hurricane to impact Florida since Wilma in 2005.

Hurricane Irma's constantly-changing course and intensity required the State emergency response team to plan for dozens of impact scenarios and resulted in one of the largest storm responses in Florida's history.

Record-breaking evacuations, shelter populations, commodity distribution, mission requests, and quite possibly the largest power restoration in American history. The success of our State's response would not have been possible without the steadfast support of our mutual aid and EMAC partners.

In the end, 38 States and the District of Columbia aided our efforts either through dedicated teams or through resources shipped.

Additionally, the military's contributions to Florida's response cannot be understated. Strategic partnerships with the National Guard and DOD proved to be the game-changing element in our response. It is important to remember that Hurricane Irma was not the only challenge we faced in 2017. Irma's impacts came just 2 weeks after Hurricane Harvey caused catastrophic damage in Texas. Ten days after Irma made landfall in Florida, Hurricane Maria impacted Puerto Rico, devastating the island. Nate was not far behind, impacting the Gulf Coast on October 7.

Despite the effects of one of the largest storms to hit our shores in over a decade, Florida stood ready in support of Texas' efforts associated with Hurricane Harvey; the division coordinated the de-

ployment of three search-and-rescue teams in a voluntary agency liaison.

To prepare for the Gulf Coast impacts associated with Hurricane Nate, we pre-staged an IMT and we made sure that ambulance, swift water rescue, recon, and US&R teams were on standby.

The aftermath of Hurricane Maria's devastating landfall in Puerto Rico presented a unique set of challenges for those affected by the storm. However, Florida once again stood ready to help our neighbors. We fulfilled critical EMAC missions, requests for law enforcement, National Guard, transportation, and utility professionals in support of the response effort.

Division staff worked closely with their Puerto Rican counterparts and members of Governor Rossello's administration to provide technical and strategic expertise, as well as information regarding the availability of Florida-based resources.

Florida remains the only State to have entered into a host State agreement to directly assist Maria survivors. This helped us coordinate the opening of resource centers to provide tens of thousands of Maria evacuees in Florida with a one-stop shop for available survivor resources.

At the request of Governor Scott, the disaster case management program was also approved for Maria evacuees in our State. This, when considered alongside TSA and the marks proves Florida's commitment to providing every storm survivor with the same level of care regardless of their origin.

The 2017 Atlantic hurricane season was a defining event for the division and our partners. We will continue to review and reflect upon the actions taken during our many response operations, seeking ways to improve our practices and provide Floridians with the best possible quality of service.

As we chart the course forward, Florida must strategically position itself to build a culture of preparedness, ready our communities for catastrophic disasters, and reduce the complexity of disaster programming. The 2017 season was the most expensive in U.S. history.

FEMA Administrator Brock Long said that if this is the new normal, Americans can't rely on a Federal cavalry when disaster strikes. They will need to have to take care of themselves.

In Florida, we couldn't agree more. As emergency managers we are taught that disasters are inherently local, and we recognize that until we return to a culture of localized responsibility, we will never truly be prepared for all disasters.

To that end, there are things we can do now together to ensure that we are ready for whatever the future may hold. Let us streamline our policies and our procedures at every level. The last thing a storm survivor needs to deal with in the aftermath of a devastating impact is another bureaucratic maze.

We can partner to train and mitigate on the front end, thus buying down the cost of disasters. Maximizing resiliency prior to emergencies will always prove more cost-effective than even the best of recoveries.

Let us plan and fund strategies that are Federally supported, State-managed and locally executed. For example, increasing management costs 12 percent would better position States and commu-

nities to manage disasters on their own while decreasing their overall dependency on Federal resources.

Administrator Long was correct in his statement: Building a culture of preparedness will be the most effective way to deal with the new normal. It is time to be bold and hit the reset button on much of what we thought we knew in this profession.

Moving forward, I want this committee to know that my team and I are available to discuss with, partner on, and work with you on all issues. We also stand ready to work alongside Administrator Long and our fellow States to move this profession forward.

I want to close by saying thank you to our Federal, State, and local partners. It was a pleasure working with you last season, and we appreciate all of your hard work. You contributed to our success, which in turn allowed us to support our neighbors when they needed it the most. That is exactly how this business is supposed to work. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Maul follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WESLEY MAUL

MARCH 15, 2018

SECTION I

At 9:10 a.m. on September 10, 2017, Hurricane Irma made landfall at Cudjoe Key as a Category 4 storm, becoming the first major hurricane to make landfall in Florida since Wilma in 2005.

Later that afternoon, Irma made landfall in Florida for a second time, now on Marco Island as a Category 3 storm. The State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) had been at the highest level of activation since September 5; almost a week of round-the-clock operations in anticipation of a major hurricane impact.

As Irma moved across our State, hurricane strength winds extended up to 80 miles and tropical storm force winds extended up to 400 miles from the center of the storm. At least 32 of Florida's rivers and creeks flooded, and 18 tornadoes were confirmed across the peninsula.

Fifty-four out of our State's 67 counties issued evacuation orders to a record 6.8 million people, resulting in our State's largest evacuation to date.

On September 11, as the storm made its way north, more than 6.7 million customers lost power—more than 64 percent of Florida utility customers.

Hurricane Irma's constantly changing course and intensity projections required the State Emergency Response Team (SERT) to plan for dozens of potential impact scenarios simultaneously and resulted in one of the largest storm responses in Florida history.

The SERT began operations by initiating coordination calls with the National Hurricane Center and county emergency management officials on September 4, a week before landfall. On September 5, the SEOC activated to Level One, the highest level of activation, and sustained its 24-hour operations until the 21st of that same month. The SEOC remained activated for a total of 35 consecutive days, until the evening of October 8, when the Activation Level returned to Three.

State and local governments utilized Alert Florida, the State-wide alert notification system, to send more than 4,500 alert messages to more than 7,000,000 unique recipients. The total number of registrations grew by 156,675 in the month of September alone.

In the SERT's common operating platform, Emergency Management (EM) Constellation, a total of 6,768 missions have been entered to date—2,000 more than Hurricane Charley and almost 5,000 more than last year's Hurricane Matthew.

Five first responder base camps were opened by the State, while 95 SERT Liaisons deployed to EOCs.

Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) operations were conducted across our State, with tens of thousands of structures searched.

State-wide, 1,440 personnel from nine Florida and 21 out-of-State USAR Task Forces completed 64 USAR missions, resulting in 751 residents assisted and 62 animals rescued.

State law enforcement also played a vital role in Florida's response, as evidenced by the 400 mission requests completed through the SERT. These operations included dedicated escorts for emergency fuel and commodity shipments moving across the State, security and the staffing of critical checkpoints.

Sixty-two Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) personnel deployed, including 21 who supported SEOC operations. These agents and officers spent 27 uninterrupted days working tirelessly to coordinate pre- and post-landfall law enforcement missions. Their contributions formed an important pillar of Florida's response.

Beach fortification and marine debris cleanup occurred on an impressive scale. In addition, 62,189 cubic yards of sand were used to fortify beaches in St Johns, Volusia, and Flagler Counties.

State-wide, 2,377 vessels were assessed and 2,118 were removed; 1,685 of those removed were in the Florida Keys alone.

Two hundred fifty-two thousand, forty-five cubic yards of vegetation, construction and demolition debris were cleared, including much from waterways in Duval, Clay, St. Johns, Putnam, Brevard, Collier, Marion, and Lee Counties.

In total, the SERT distributed more than 14,945,854 liters of water, 13,870,560 meals, 270,042 tarps, and 13,000 cots.

Seven hundred three shelters opened throughout the State, housing a record-breaking peak population of 191,764 people.

These totals include 117 Special Needs shelters that housed a peak population of 14,290 individuals. In addition, sheltered survivors were served more than 1 million meals.

Forty-four thousand, eight hundred three volunteers donated almost 1.5 million hours to the response effort, a time commitment valued at almost \$3.2 million. Five-point-eight million pounds of food donations were received.

The Florida Disaster Fund, working with Volunteer Florida, has contributed \$2.5 million in grants to 77 organizations, and hopes to commit another \$5 million.

Thanks to the outstanding efforts of our team and partners, every request for resources from county emergency management agencies was met. The SERT successfully planned and actively coordinated the strategic and logistical operations required of an effective response to a major storm impact.

SECTION II

The success of our State's response would not have been possible without the steadfast support of our Mutual Aid and EMAC partners.

Last year, the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) successfully coordinated 145 EMAC and Mutual Aid requests—129 for Hurricane Irma, 11 for Maria, 4 for Harvey, and 1 for Nate.

Thousands of linemen arrived through Mutual Aid agreements and helped restore electricity to those more than 6.7 million customers left without power. Their round-the-clock efforts resulted in a 91 percent restoration of State-wide power in only 6 days.

Two-hundred twenty-six trucks carried 1,422,587 gallons of fuel into Florida. The 24 emergency fueling stations supplied through these operations supported the efforts of our first responders throughout the State.

Thirty-four Incident Management Teams (IMTs) deployed, 28 from outside Florida, and conducted a host of missions, including Basecamp, Field, EOC Support, Recovery, and MARC Support Operations.

In the end, 38 States and the District of Columbia aided our efforts, either through dedicated teams or through resources shipped.

Federal agencies also proved invaluable partners during the response to Irma. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), for example, supplied 8,455,768 meals, 70,042 tarps, 42,491 gallons of fuel, and 5,446,546 liters of drinking water.

Federal personnel deployed across the State in a variety of mission roles. These included including 465 FEMA and 294 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) surge staff, 11 management teams, and 8 FEMA Urban Search-and-Rescue teams.

The military's contribution to Florida's response cannot be understated. Almost 11,000 uniformed Service Members were deployed, 3,228 of them from outside our State.

The Florida National Guard supported nearly every aspect of the State's response through sheltering, search and rescue, security, communications, and commodity distribution operations. Two thousand eight hundred seventy-seven Guard personnel supported 352 shelters in 42 counties, distributed more than 4.8 million meals and almost 6.5 million liters of water, and de-mucked 471 homes in the Florida Keys.

Regarding Title X resources, the Defense Coordinating Element (DCE) integrated extremely well into daily operations.

The Defense Coordinating Officer (DCO) and his team assisted in the development of a plan that helped the Florida Air Operations Branch build a robust set of planning, coordination, and tracking capabilities. This plan's implementation allowed for the synchronization of aviation assets between 6 agencies and across 853 fixed-wing and 423 rotary-wing missions.

The DCE also coordinated, planned, and executed operations involving four uniformed services.

They provided operational coordination with the ships USS Iwo Jima, USS New York, and USS Abraham Lincoln, major naval assets positioned to help with Florida's response.

In addition, Naval Air Station (NAS) Key West provided responder housing as well as docking and support for the TS Empire State, a troop ship that ensured the availability of critically-needed rescue and support capabilities in the Florida Keys.

They worked with FEMA and the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) to track the delivery of more than 800 trailers containing life-saving and life-sustaining FEMA supplies.

Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers (EPLO) coordinated more than 20 air transport missions carrying the medically dependent, critical supplies, and personnel.

Last, the Joint Regional Medical Planning Officer (JRMPO) attached to the DCE successfully integrated with the SERT's Health and Human Services personnel. The partnership assisted in the development of mission assignments, such as for the movement of critical medical assets under the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS).

The JRMPO also assisted the ESF-8 with the development of patient movement and sheltering plans and coordinated with U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) and the SERT to develop a vector control plan for anticipated threats stemming from post-storm expanding mosquito populations.

In all, the FEMA Region IV DCE identified the necessary Title X resources and deployed 49 staff from all four service branches. During the response, the DCE completed 48 mission assignments and 11 tasking orders, resulting in the obligation of more than \$300 million—all with zero loss or damage. Their operational contributions and strategic insights only enhanced the SERT's capabilities, proving, once again, that DoD contributions are indispensable.

SECTION III

It is important to remember that Hurricane Irma was not the only challenge we faced in 2017. Irma's impact came just 2 weeks after Hurricane Harvey caused catastrophic damage in Texas. Ten days after Irma made landfall in Florida, Hurricane Maria impacted Puerto Rico, devastating the island. Nate was not far behind, impacting the Gulf Coast on October 7.

Despite the effects of one of the largest storms to hit our shores in over a decade, Florida and FDEM stood ready to support.

In support of Texas's efforts associated with Hurricane Harvey, the Division coordinated the deployment of a volunteer agency liaison as well as three Search-and-Rescue teams. These assets travelled to the Houston area and helped their Texas counterparts respond to the storm.

To prepare for potential West Florida impacts associated with Hurricane Nate, we pre-staged an IMT at the SEOC. We made sure Ambulance, Swift Water Rescue, Recon, and USAR Teams were on Standby.

We also expanded the operation of the State Assistance and Information Line (SAIL) in anticipation of any potential impact scenarios and coordinated the opening and staffing of seven public shelters.

Hurricane Maria's devastating landfall in Puerto Rico presented a unique set of challenges for those affected by the storm. However, Florida once again stood ready to help our neighbors. In preparation and response to the storm's impact, the Division and our partners took several important steps.

We fulfilled critical EMAC mission requests in support of the response effort. These included:

- an FDOT crew to evaluate traffic signal installations and transportation systems,
- an 8-member FDLE Law Enforcement IMT,
- a 26-airman National Guard sheltering support mission,
- 50 Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) officers, along with 12 officers from the Orlando Police Department, providing security and law enforcement support,

- a 20-day National Guard rotary-wing mission.

Division staff worked closely with their Puerto Rico counterparts and members of Governor Rossello's government to provide technical and strategic expertise, as well as information regarding the availability of Florida-based resources.

Just as important was our effort to safeguard the hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans who evacuated to the State of Florida.

Florida remains the only State to have entered into a Host State Agreement to directly assist Maria survivors. This helped us coordinate the opening of State Multi-Agency Resource Centers (MARC) at our airports, and later in the community, as early as October 10, 2017.

These MARCs have proven an incredibly helpful resource for many of those who were displaced by the effects of Hurricane Maria. The centers brought together State and Federal agencies as well as volunteer organizations to provide Maria evacuees in Florida with a one-stop shop of available survivor resources.

Participating agencies included include FEMA, the Florida Department of Children and Families, Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Department of Health, Department of Economic Opportunity, the American Red Cross, and Catholic Charities.

These partners offer storm victims a wide range of important services, including help with registering for FEMA Individual Assistance, crisis counseling, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) information, assistance with unaccompanied minors and agency social services, assistance with animal services, medical attention and health concerns, employment information and training services, food and water resources, language guidance, and spiritual care.

To date, 34,017 individuals have visited Florida MARCs and received assistance, leaving little doubt that these facilities made a substantial contribution in addressing the needs Maria survivors.

Additionally, the Division has supported Individual Assistance programming for Maria survivors in Florida, such the Transitional Shelter Assistance (TSA) program.

TSA saw a peak of 1,786 households on January 14, 2018, totaling 4,855 individual Maria survivors checked into Florida hotels.

At the request of Governor Scott, the Disaster Case Management (DCM) program was also approved for Maria evacuees in in our State. This, when considered alongside TSA and the MARCs, proves Florida's commitment to providing every storm survivor with the same level of service, regardless of their origin.

The SEOC currently remains activated in support of Puerto Rico's recovery as FDEM continues to play an integral role in the coordination of response efforts between Federal, State, local, private industry, volunteer, and faith-based organizations.

SECTION IV

The information regarding Hurricane Irma's total impact is still being collected.

All of Florida's 67 counties were declared under a Presidential Disaster Declaration. Out of these, 55 counties were declared for all categories of Public Assistance, while 49 counties were declared for Individual Assistance.

To date, 9,444 recovery projects have been initiated through 1,214 Requests for Public Assistance (RPA). At last estimate, Florida's State Agencies spent \$727,327,438 responding to the storm, and our local community costs are expected to exceed \$1 billion.

A record-breaking 2,644,137 Floridians have registered for Individual Assistance.

The Small Business Administration (SBA) has approved more than 31,000 loans, totaling \$1,059,938,900 in Florida.

FEMA's Individuals and Households Program (IHP) has approved \$992,041,840.70 million in assistance, with a to-date disbursement of \$909,200,734.85.

This includes \$686,487,724.77 in Housing Assistance, of which \$679,737,471.13 is already in the hands of storm survivors.

IHP also includes \$305,554,225.93 approved in Other Needs Assessment (ONA) grants, with a to-date disbursement of \$229,463,263.72.

The Transitional Sheltering Assistance program successfully provided hotel rooms for 27,332 displaced households over a 6-month period, ending just this past week.

For the first time, Florida executed the Sheltering and Temporary Emergency Power (STEP) program. However, unlike in other States, Florida took the approach of a Federally-funded, State-administered, locally-managed program.

STEP was authorized in ten Florida counties: Monroe, Collier, Lee, Hendry, Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, Hendry, Charlotte, and St. Johns. However, only Monroe County chose to utilize the program for a current total of 204 eligible households. To date, approximately \$1.6 million dollars has been spent on STEP

within Monroe County at an average of \$8,827 per unit—all to provide safe, sanitary, and secure survivor housing in the Florida Keys.

Moving forward, there are important considerations regarding State mitigation efforts.

Currently, FEMA's revised 6-month HMGP estimate stands at \$354,066,081, while counties still have more in unfunded project costs than our programs have in available funding—\$4,152,347,415 as of last estimate.

For decades, Florida has been a model of mitigation practices, and Hurricane Irma provided yet another case study in the value of mitigation planning. The juxtaposition of pre-Hurricane Andrew and post-Florida Building Codes structures in the Florida Keys will provide valuable data as we begin to employ Irma HMGP funds in buying down the cost of future disasters.

SECTION V

Hurricane Irma's recovery marks the first full implementation of the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF) in Florida, and having the full Federal family integrated into the process has proven a tremendous success.

Florida's NDRF structure mirrored the Federal NDRF structure in pairing partner agencies to perform in a disaster recovery context. This framework was critical in transitioning through the response, recovery, and mitigation phases of Hurricane Irma.

In addition, this level of integration carried into the place-based teams, facilitating expeditious resource delivery to the most impacted jurisdictions. Staff embodied four guiding principles when engaging with impacted entities:

1. Disasters are local; locals maintain the best knowledge regarding their communities' needs.
2. Focus on tangible projects that buy down natural hazard risk.
3. Promote return on investment in all actions.
4. Always be mindful of a project's life cycle.

The leveraging of funds and programs through the NDRF provided the ability to build resiliency through mitigation. The NDRF structure integrated steady-state and Stafford Act funds and programs in support of disaster recovery and mitigation needs.

Exploring the integration of additional disaster recovery opportunities is on-going. Current efforts in project advancement include the Community Reinvestment Act and Public-Private Partnerships.

The framework also provides a mechanism for direct access to Federal agencies with regulatory oversight or funding opportunities. This level of engagement during the early stages of project development increases program compliance decreases the odds of funding de-obligation.

Florida's success in utilizing the NDRF should serve as a model for other States, ensuring the speedy recovery of impacted communities.

SECTION VI

The 2017 Atlantic Hurricane Season was a defining event for the Division and our partners. We will continue to review and reflect upon the actions taken during the response, seeking ways to improve our practices and provide Floridians with the best possible quality of service.

Though the storm moved through Florida only 6 months ago, we have already begun to chart a course forward.

Debris cleanup, evacuations, fuel, mass logistics, health and medical risks, communications, and considerations for medically dependent and vulnerable populations will be our primary areas of focus. Through effective After-Action Reviews and continuously seeking opportunities for improvement, FDEM will ensure that every Floridian receives the care and service they need to successfully prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate against any potential emergency.

Recovery is a lengthy process—one that takes years of hard work and dedication. Considering the magnitude of the event we witnessed last year, there is still much to be done before we can officially declare this mission accomplished. However, after witnessing the outstanding determination and efficiency of our staff during my time with the Division, and the exemplary results achieved through our team's work during Irma, I have no doubt that Florida is beyond equipped to handle the challenges ahead and will continue to set the standard for emergency management everywhere.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you.
The Chair recognizes Mr. Meléndez.

**STATEMENT OF JOSE MELÉNDEZ-ORTIZ, VICE CHAIRMAN,
COMMITTEE ON FEDERAL AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,
AND STATUS, COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO**

Mr. MELÉNDEZ-ORTIZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member for the opportunity to appear before this committee today. Before I begin, I would like to extend our deepest gratitude for your dedicated support in assisting us in the process of recovery and rebuilding. I also want to thank you for your unconditional assistance to our sole representative in Congress, our champion and my friend, the Honorable Jenniffer Gonzalez.

It has been 6 months since Hurricane Irma fumbled through the Caribbean including Puerto Rico and 176 days since Hurricane Maria ripped through our island. In the span of 2 weeks, Puerto Rico was hit by two Category 4 and 5 hurricanes.

For the past 20 years, since Hurricane Georges, we have been spared. Up until September of last year, we often boasted that Puerto Rico was especially blessed and protected. Then we were humbled.

In September 2017, we were facing one of the worst natural disasters in modern history. It was as if Mother Nature was reminding us all that no matter how strong one might be, nature will always be more powerful and it deserves our utmost respect. That, Mr. Chairman and Members of this committee, is our first lesson.

Let us be honest. None of us, either at the State or Federal levels, were prepared to tackle the devastation caused by Hurricane Maria. This is our second lesson. We must make the necessary adjustments to adapt our emergency preparedness and recovery efforts for a more effective and efficient response in the upcoming hurricane season.

To do this at the Federal level, a citizen guidance must be taken into consideration. No. 1, the Federal Government must anticipate shipping delays to the island and take the necessary steps to ensure rapid response by sea and air.

No. 2, nowadays telecommunications are a basic necessity. Your smartphone is no longer a luxury. It is a piece of emergency equipment that need to function in order for the most basic communication to phone.

No. 3, cut the red tape. Whoever thought that bureaucracy could effectively handle emergencies was sorely mistaken. It can't despite all good intentions.

No. 4, there is no space for political pandering in the middle of an emergency. To use the pain and suffering of millions of American citizens to indulge in cheap politician and gain political recognition is simply immoral. It is a shameful exploitation of people who are merely trying to recoup their normalcy in the midst of chaos.

No. 5, and this is important, we must urgently invest in strengthening our power grid. You know, the recently-approved relief package included \$16 billion for Puerto Rico. The funds are badly needed as Puerto Rico simply lacks the resources, human or financial, to fortify the system and prepare for hurricane season.

The simple truth is that we need more time. We need more time, more materials, more resources. It pains me to say, but we need more sense of urgency.

So it is with the deep respect that I ask you as Members of Congress inject that much-needed sense of urgency to our Federal agencies. I make this humble request on behalf of millions of families who in the face of adversity rose up the day after the storm to clean their houses, clean their debris from the streets, and help those in most need in their communities.

I make this request on behalf of the thousands of doctors who have continued to attend to the sick in spite of the lack of power or internet in their offices or hospitals.

I make this request on behalf of the thousands of entrepreneurs who have invested every single penny they have in the bank to save their businesses and open their doors to the public. They rose in spite of adversity.

I make this request on behalf of the thousands of people who lost their jobs in the aftermath but have not quit, and continue to look for work in order to get ahead.

I make this request on behalf of the thousands of kids who go to school every day in spite of a lack of power or water. Dedication continues to be more important than any obstacle because you see, behind the devastation of Maria a bigger story is being written in Puerto Rico. It is a story of resilience. It is a story of people who want to get ahead, who want to be self-sufficient, who want to get back to normal.

With that, I thank you for your time and I hope that we can continue to working together so we can build a stronger and better Puerto Rico. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Meléndez-Ortiz follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOSE MELÉNDEZ, STATE REPRESENTATIVE, AT-LARGE,
PUERTO RICO

MARCH 15, 2018

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Ranking Minority Member Thompson for the opportunity to appear before this committee today to share with you some of the many lessons learned from the passing of Hurricane Maria through Puerto Rico nearly 6 months ago.

Mr. Chairman, I appear before you as an At-Large State Representative, on behalf of the nearly 3.5 million American citizens who call Puerto Rico our home. Before I begin, I wish to extend our deepest gratitude for your dedicated support in assisting us in the process of recovery and rebuilding. In the past 6 months, you have maintained a watchful and empathic eye, evaluating the situation on the island first-hand with visits, and maintaining constant communications with Federal and local agencies to ensure that the needs of our American citizens are met and that the normalcy we all long for is finally restored. I also want to thank you for your unconditional assistance to our sole representative in Congress, the Honorable Jennifer Gonzalez, who has demonstrated exemplary leadership as a coalitions builder to secure the necessary resources that afford these American citizens sound health, homes, and the restoration of basic needs including electricity, potable water, and telecommunications, among many other items.

It has been 6 months since Hurricane Irma pummeled through the Caribbean, including Puerto Rico, and 176 days since Hurricane Maria ripped through our island. Within a span of 2 weeks, Puerto Rico was hit by two Category 4 and 5 hurricanes. For the past 20 years—since Hurricane Georges—we had been spared, and up until September of last year, we often boasted that Puerto Rico was especially blessed and protected.

And then, in just 15 days, we were humbled. On September 23, 2017 we were facing one of the worst natural disasters in modern history. It was as if Mother Nature was reminding us all that no matter how strong one might be, nature will always be more powerful, and it deserves our utmost respect. That, Mr. Chairman and Members of this committee, is our first lesson.

Let me begin by stating that in spite of enjoying a 20-year period of relative peace during hurricane season, I can confidently state that our emergency preparedness plans have always been comprehensive and effective. For both Hurricanes Irma and Maria, our plan was put in place on time; allowing the State government and our first responders, as well as the mayors, to quickly evacuate residents from at-risk communities onto shelters, and for individuals and families to purchase food and supplies, and to secure their homes and businesses. When Hurricane Irma made landfall, we were ready, and we were fortunate that while it devastated certain areas in the northeast of the island, the damage caused in other parts was not severe, allowing for swift mobilization and recovery.

As far as Hurricane Irma was concerned, we were lucky, unlike our neighbors in the Eastern Caribbean. We were grateful for having been partially spared and immediately began to help our neighbors. Thousands of Puerto Ricans answered the call for help and packed their boats with tons of much-needed supplies and resources. They headed Southeast to lend a helping hand to our neighbors in the United States and British Virgin Islands, St. Marteen, Antigua & Barbuda, among others.

And then, suddenly; Maria showed up on the map. It moved rapidly through the Atlantic, and we prepared once more and prayed that luck would be on our side again. But this time, there was no escaping the wrath. Hurricane Maria enveloped our entire island, and for over 12 hours, it ravaged us with fierce winds and torrential rains. In less than 1 day, millions of families were robbed of their most precious belongings; stripped of basic services, lost without their livelihood.

The next day, as we opened the doors of our damaged homes to try and recover from the trauma, we found ourselves without no water, no power, no communications . . . and just, utter devastation. As I mentioned before, our emergency preparedness plan was implemented well in advance of the storm. But our plan did not take into account the magnitude and sheer force of this hurricane. It was put in place, but it was not enough. FEMA's plan was also ready, but it also proved inadequate. Let's be honest. None of us—either at the State or Federal levels—were prepared to tackle the devastation caused by Hurricane Maria. This is our second lesson: We must make the necessary adjustments to adapt our emergency preparedness and recovery efforts for more effective and efficient response in the upcoming hurricane season.

In making adjustments to emergency preparedness plans at the Federal level, a series of important items must be taken into consideration:

1. *In order to better prepare for hurricane season, the Federal Government must anticipate shipping delays to the island and take the necessary steps, to ensure rapid response by sea and air, including waiving or eliminating cabotage laws.*—Puerto Rico is an island. It may seem obvious, but we quickly learned that because of our distance from the mainland, urgent supplies, including water, power generators, and medical supplies took weeks to get to the island, delaying FEMA's relief efforts. Indeed, shipping delays have caused havoc in the restoration of power as outside contractors and the Corps of Engineers wait impatiently for materials and equipment to arrive.

2. *Nowadays, telecommunications are a basic necessity.*—Your smartphone is no longer a luxury. It is a piece of emergency equipment that needs to function in order for the most basic of communications to flow. In Puerto Rico, we expected that we would be without power for some time after the storm. But we did not anticipate that telecommunications would be shot down entirely.

This is extremely important. I want you to picture being on a mountain after a solid 12-hour pounding of 155 miles per hour winds and over 20 inches of rain in a house that lost its roof . . . has no electricity, no water, and a diabetic mother who needs dialysis. You have no landline, no WIFI, and your telecom company service is down. The road is blocked by debris, so you are unable to move from your location. You don't know if the nearest hospital is open, and you cannot call your neighbor for help. You also won't be able to reach 9-1-1 to request emergency services of any kind. I cannot stress enough how terrible is the feeling of isolation in the midst of devastation. Six months after the storm, this remains the case for many people in Puerto Rico. It is unacceptable. The Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) announcement last week to direct \$954 million toward the restoration and expansion of communications networks in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands is welcome news. We must afford people in emergency situations access to telecommunications during and after the emergencies so that they can check in with friends and family and seek help, if needed.

3. *Cut the red tape.*—Whoever thought that bureaucracy could effectively handle emergencies was sorely mistaken. It can't, despite all good intentions. Sadly, we are still suffering the consequences of inefficiencies brought on by excessive paperwork, inter and intra-agency consultation and needless requirements. Just this week, Governor Rosselló, announced an initiative aimed at identifying and eliminating areas of overregulation and bureaucratic burdens. The Federal Government is not immune to these shortcomings. It should follow suit and eliminate red tape in order to ensure a more effective response to emergencies.

4. *There is no space for political pandering in the middle of an emergency.*—I—as well as most of the American citizens in Puerto Rico—wholeheartedly believe that our leaders at the Executive branch and here in Congress have done their best to provide for steadfast relief and recovery. You have done so because you are genuinely concerned for the well-being of the 3.5 million American citizens in Puerto Rico. Can we improve the way we do it? Certainly. Nobody is perfect. This committee hearing is testament to that, and we are immensely grateful for your consideration.

But, to use the pain and suffering of millions of American citizens to indulge in cheap politicking and gain political recognition is simply immoral. It is a shameful exploitation of people who are merely trying to recoup their normalcy in the midst of chaos. As we approach rebuilding efforts, I urge all decision makers and leaders to find common ground, set partisanship aside, and rally together for the thousands of families in Puerto Rico that deserve to rise and prosper.

5. *We must urgently invest in strengthening our power grid.*—According to the Puerto Rico Power Authority (PREPA), as of Monday we had 93% power generation and 91% power consumption, meaning that over 1.3 million customers have had their power restored. In numbers, it looks as if there has been progress. It has been slow, but there has been progress.

But, let's put this in perspective. Six months after Hurricane Irma hit the island, over 130,000 people are still without power. Imagine living close to 200 days without electricity. And, less than 2 weeks ago, a failure in one of the main distribution lines provoked a major outage and suddenly, about 800,000 customers had lost power again. Telecommunications were shot and tensions grew high.

So, yes, there has been progress. But, we still have a long, long way to go. And, no one, absolutely no one, can be satisfied with these numbers. Just last week, hundreds of thousands of residents throughout the northeast mainland were left without power after the winter cyclone bomb, and authorities could not work fast enough to restore service.

Our system is old and fragile. Recently, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Lieutenant General Todd Semonite asserted that the shortage of supplies that has delayed power restoration is due in part to the age of our grid; and pointed at the fact that some of the parts that were needed were no longer available in the market. In order to complete the work, they had to order these parts be manufactured once again just for Puerto Rico.

Sadly, the investment being made in producing these old parts and equipment is only a "Band-aid." Because the system is not being modernized, it will remain just as vulnerable as it was a day before Hurricane Irma made landfall last September. Wouldn't it be better to invest taxpayers' dollars in updating the system so that it holds better during the upcoming hurricane season, which starts in just 76 days?

The recently-approved relief package that was approved and signed into law included \$16 billion for Puerto Rico. The funds are badly needed as Puerto Rico simply lacks the resources—human or financial—to fortify the system and prepare for hurricane season.

The simple truth is that we need more time. We need more time, more materials, more resources. It pains me to say, we need more sense of urgency.

Our request for diligence is far from ungrateful. We are forever indebted to the thousands of Federal workers from FEMA, the U.S. Corps of Engineers, and other agencies who are working on-site. They are committed public servants who want to see our people recover, grow, and prosper.

We cherish our Federal workers' hard work on our behalf. We understand that they too, have been humbled by nature. We believe that by coming over, they have confronted a challenge that they never imagined.

We know that they have left their families behind to come here and look after us. We get that they miss their homes. They want to get back to normal. Just like we do.

So it is with deep respect that I ask that you, as Members of Congress, inject that much-needed sense of urgency to our Federal agencies. We all need to be more efficient and steadfast in our recovery efforts. We need it not just so that the people of Puerto Rico get back to normal, but so that ALL of us do.

I make this humble request on behalf of the millions of families who in the face of adversity, rose up the day after the storm to clean their houses, clear the debris from the streets, and help those most in need in their communities.

I make this request on behalf of the thousands of doctors who have continued to tend to the sick in spite of the lack of power or internet in their offices or hospitals. Many of them lost their homes, their offices were severely damaged, but that has not stopped them from caring for their patients.

I make this request on behalf of the thousands of entrepreneurs who have invested every single penny they have in the bank to save their businesses, and open their doors to the public. Some of them are chefs . . . others are barbers or mechanics. They rose in spite of adversity. They go to work every day hoping for normalcy, for economic recovery and salvation of their aspirations.

I make this request on behalf of the thousands of people who lost their jobs in the aftermath, but have not quit, and continue to look for work in order to get ahead.

I make this request on behalf of the thousands of kids who go to school every day, in spite of the lack of power or water. Their education continues to be more important than any obstacle.

Because you see, behind the devastation of Maria, a bigger story is being written in Puerto Rico. It is a story of resilience. It is about people who want to get ahead, who want to be self-sufficient, who want to get back to normal.

With that, I thank you for your time, and hope that we can continue working together so we can build a stronger and better Puerto Rico.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you, sir.

The Chair recognizes Ms. De Marrais.

**STATEMENT OF JEANNE-AIMEE DE MARRAIS, SENIOR
DIRECTOR, SAVE THE CHILDREN**

Ms. DE MARRAIS. Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, and Members of the committee, I am Jeanne-Aimee De Marrais, the senior director of U.S. Emergencies for Save the Children.

Since Katrina in 2005, I have led our response to every natural disaster and man-made disaster in the United States, and I had the honor of serving on FEMA's National Advisory Council and I currently serve on FEMA's IPAWS Subcommittee of the NAC.

On behalf of Save the Children, thank you for this opportunity to really highlight the needs of children and the lessons learned across all three disasters.

I would be remiss if I also though didn't thank Ranking Member Thompson, Congressman Donovan, Congressman Payne for your leadership in introducing and helping pass the Homeland Security Act for Children through the House. This legislation will go a long way to help children in emergencies and hopefully will help fill some of the gaps that I am going to highlight today.

So Save the Children has been working for more than 100 years to support children in crisis and emergencies in the United States and around the world. Through our on-the-ground work during the three hurricanes we have identified critical gaps. We keep seeing these gaps again and again in emergencies.

We seek to partner with Congress to help really close these gaps to better protect and support children.

The three hurricanes, as we have heard, had a massive impact on infrastructure, but it had a massive even greater impact on children's lives across all three disasters. Save the Children continues

to work on the long-term recovery in each of the three areas, helping rebuild schools, helping rebuild child care programs, after-school programs, and helping deliver mental health and psychosocial recovery programs for children, which is the most profound gap that we have seen across all three emergencies.

In Puerto Rico specifically, the estimates are that it is going to take more than 10 years for the overall recovery. We have heard that from many of the experts.

We continue to hear that many schools have lacked electricity and lacked running water, lacked drinking water. Imagine trying to conduct school for hundreds of children each day without power in the classrooms, without access to learning laboratories, without access to regular support.

So children in Puerto Rico have missed hundreds and hundreds of hours of learning. Many of the most vulnerable children will not ever catch up because of the months of school that they have had decreased opportunities for learning.

So while there are many visible indications of damage to structures, outdoor spaces, recreational equipment, there is also this profound impact and what we call invisible scars and emotional and mental stress for children, for teachers, for their families.

So what can we do about this? We would urge Congress to consider three areas to help close the gap. The first is in education recovery and what we call a return to learning. Congress must enact policies with a commitment that no child affected by a disaster misses more than a month of school post-disaster.

This is something that globally we are trying to work toward, but in the United States to have children miss multiple months of school related to disasters is not OK. It is not enough.

The commitment to the return to learning should include a policy framework that quickly assesses the number of children out of school and the amount of recovery support and learning support that children need to get back to normal.

The second area is Congress should consider amending Stafford to include child care as a critical service. Right now, schools, primary, secondary, and higher ed are included, but early learning and child care is still not included as a critical service. So that would go a long way to support children.

Then the last area is that Congress must adequately fund mental health recovery programs for survivors of natural disasters. We are seeing this in every single incident in the United States that it is a critical gap that is putting the children at risk and families at risk.

So thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on our work. Children might be only 25 percent of our Nation, but they are 100 percent of our future, so thank you for your commitment to children.

[The prepared statement of Ms. De Marrais follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JEANNE-AIMEE DE MARRAIS

MARCH 15, 2018

Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, and Members of the committee, I am Jeanne-Aimee De Marrais, the senior director of U.S. Emergencies at Save the Children. Since 2005, I have led the organization's response to every natural and

man-made disaster in the United States since Hurricane Katrina. I also have served on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) National Advisory Council from since 2014. On behalf of Save the Children, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the lessons learned following the three major hurricanes that hit the United States in 2017.

Save the Children is the National leader for child-focused disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. We have responded to emergencies and humanitarian crises around the world for nearly 100 years. Through our on-the-ground work in response to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, and other disasters, we have identified critical gaps in States' and communities' capacities to protect children in emergencies. Save the Children seeks to work with Congress to ensure the unique needs of children are addressed during the long road to recovery and to better equip States to respond to the next disaster.

Hurricanes Maria, Irma, and Harvey created catastrophic damage and upended the lives of millions of children. Save the Children responded quickly to each of these major storms to provide relief to children and families in emergency shelters. Our response included child-friendly spaces, distribution of essential supplies for children and babies, and psychosocial support. Our on-going response is now focused on recovery—providing evidence-based programs that strengthen community outreach and assist with child care and school restoration recovery efforts. Save the Children is also providing psychosocial support (PSS) training and programs across program areas and building partnerships to support the PSS recovery phase. Our focus is to serve the most marginalized children and families in these communities.

Experts estimate the Puerto Rico recovery process will take 10 years, longer than the recovery process after Hurricane Katrina. Six months post-hurricane, at least 15 percent of the island remains without power, and frequent brown-outs impact as much as 50 percent of the island.

Nearly one in three schools lacks electricity and many also lack consistent access to clean, potable water. This has forced many schools to operate on a limited daily schedule from 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. This has led to school-age children in Puerto Rico missing out on many hundreds of hours of learning. Not only are Puerto Rican students falling behind their peers academically, but they lack the daily routine school brings, which is critical for emotional recovery. While the visible damage to structures, outdoor spaces, and recreational equipment are a constant reminder of the physical devastation of the hurricane, children and families continue to have invisible scars from emotional and mental stress. Many children urgently need psychological and emotional support.

Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria forced children into incredibly stressful situations—evacuations, unfamiliar emergency shelters, and the loss of homes, possessions, and routines. Families arrived at shelters with little or no supplies for hygiene or infant care. Child care and early childhood development programs and schools were closed or damaged, leaving children and families without these critical services. The storms may also impact children's long-term emotional, mental health, and psychosocial well-being. If not addressed, this can have a detrimental effect on their behavior and school performance and affect a family for generations.

Following Hurricane Katrina, the Presidentially-appointed National Commission on Children and Disasters was formed, chaired by Save the Children. The Commission released its final report in 2010 documenting 81 recommendations to improve outcomes for children across 11 emergency planning functions (including mass care, disaster case management, health, schools, child care, housing, evacuation and reunification, and recovery).^{1,2} From 2008–2015, Save the Children issued a *National Report Card on Protecting Children in Disasters* measuring the Nation's progress against the National Commission's recommendations.³ The 2015 report found that 79 percent of these recommendations remained unfilled more than a decade after Hurricane Katrina. Specifically, large gaps remain in preparation for family reunification, protection in mass care settings, coordinating with child-serving institutions, and providing immediate and long-term psychosocial/mental health and pediatric support.

¹National Commission on Children and Disasters. 2010 Report to the President and Congress. AHRQ Publication No. 10–M037. Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. (2010).

²<https://archive.ahrq.gov/prep/nccdreport/nccdreport.pdf>.

³Save The Children. Still At Risk: U.S. Children 10 Years After Hurricane Katrina 2015 National Report Card on Protecting Children in Disasters. Fairfield, CT: Save The Children. (2015).

Much work remains to be done to ensure children are protected when crisis strikes. We wanted to focus on four areas today that Congress could do to help children as they recover from these three devastating hurricanes.

EDUCATION RECOVERY—RETURN TO LEARNING

Each year disasters have a major impact on children, youth, and education systems. Big or small, these result in children missing school days, absenteeism by teachers who themselves may be affected by the disasters, disruption of education cycles, school closure because of damage and destruction to school infrastructure, or repeated or prolonged use of schools as emergency shelters. For disaster-prone areas, this can mean that every year children are losing many precious student-teacher contact hours, which severely impacts educational outcomes and a child's overall development.

Additionally, when children have safe spaces to learn and play, and can access a full range of services and support, they are less vulnerable to the increased risks that go hand-in-hand with disasters. Schools can also provide children with the space they need to access psychological support and assist with regaining a sense of normality and healing from trauma.

There are significant gaps in information from the education sector on both the short- and long-term impacts disasters have on education. A lack of official data collection and analysis of the number of children and schools affected by disasters inhibits coordination between response agencies, Government bodies, and community organizations, and impacts the effectiveness of the education response as a whole.

Congressional Recommendation.—Ensure that no displaced child is out of an educational setting for more than 30 days. Congress must enact policies with a commitment that no child misses more than a month of school, post-disaster. A return to learning policy framework should include: Assessing the number children out of school, number of learning spaces needed, limiting the use of schools as temporary shelters, expediting the rehabilitation and refurbishment of damaged schools, establishing temporary learning spaces, and providing alternative education delivery programs (such as education in shelters or additional funding for afterschool programming). Congress should create a permanent funding mechanism to support recovery for schools and students to ensure that school systems recovering from disasters are provided immediate resources to reopen and restore the learning environment in a timely manner and provide support for displaced students and their host schools.

We also urge Congress to call for an investigation and documentation of the short- and long-term impacts of disasters on schools. Such a study can identify policy, implementation, data, and knowledge gaps that will provide an evidence base to inform program and advocacy strategies, as well as seek to put more comprehensive numbers behind the stories of the impacts of disasters.

CHILD CARE RECOVERY

Currently, private, for-profit child care programs, which comprise the majority of child care programs in the United States, are ineligible for FEMA recovery funding. Extensive research has shown that child care services are essential to the economic health and vitality of a community.⁴ During a disaster, workers with young children cannot resume their jobs unless there is safe, secure child care for their children. Due to limited funding opportunities for private child care programs, most facilities that are damaged or destroyed in a disaster receive little to no Federal recovery support.

Congressional Recommendation.—Congress should amend the Stafford Act to make child care a critical service. This would place it in the same category as schools, which would alleviate the requirement for child care facilities to apply to for Small Business Administration (SBA) loans. Child care providers rarely receive SBA loans because their profit margin is so low. This has acted as a deterrent for many of these providers to even apply. In addition, we urge Congress to authorize a grant funding mechanism, such as an emergency contingency fund, to repair or rebuild private, for-profit child care facilities, support the establishment of temporary child care, and reimburse States for subsidizing child care services to disaster-affected families.

MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

Natural and man-made disasters frequently have wide-spread, deep, and enduring impacts on children's mental health. Most children experience long-term reactions

⁴<http://www.mildredwarner.org/econdev/child-care>.

to a disaster. Therefore, it is important that adults who care for children at schools and child care facilities are trained to provide supportive services after a major disaster, rather than relying exclusively on the traditional clinical approach of triage and referral.

Congressional Recommendation.—Congress and the Department of Education should award funds to States to implement and evaluate training and professional development programs train teachers on how to provide support to grieving students and students in crisis. States should also be encouraged to establish requirements related to teacher certification and recertification. In addition, Congress should adequately fund the National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative (NCTSI) and Project SERV State grants to provide trauma treatment, programming, and services in schools and communities for children, youth, and families who experience or witness traumatic events.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING & ACCOUNTABILITY

The biggest obstacle to supporting children through disaster response is inadequate funding. Robust funding and strong accountability structures are required to meet the needs of children. While the United States invests billions of dollars to support emergency preparedness and response, very often children's needs are overlooked. In fact, of every \$10 in Federal emergency preparedness grants, less than one cent has gone toward activities targeting children's safety.

Congressional Recommendation.—Congress, through the appropriations process, has the responsibility to fund the Federal Government in such a way as to meet the needs of children. We need to dedicate more funding to emergency preparedness, response, and recovery to lessen the gaps that remain and further support children.

We thank the committee for the opportunity to provide testimony on our work responding to these disasters and look forward to working with the Members of the committee to ensure that children and families receive the support they need to recover from disasters.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you for your commitment to children as well. I think it was very moving. I went through a lot of shelters, you know, after Harvey hit and it was very sad to see all these children in the shelters.

I will take a look at amending the Stafford Act. I think it is a very good idea. It is a very good idea.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. Clay, I would like to kind-of focus on sort-of my backyard and yours. That is my State that—your State that got—Sheila's State that got hit, and this is kind-of the—I thought we had an easel. I am sorry you have got to hold that up.

[Laughter.]

Chairman MCCAUL. But so this is a map that I have shown to the Governor, and I have shown to actually the President of the United States when he came down talking about how the flood actually happened.

Cypress Creek was supposed to be a levee system but they never did that and water shedded down to Barker Addicks, and then controlled spillage into the neighborhoods downstream at 1:30 in the morning, which wasn't all that great, and then Buffalo Bayou downtown Houston.

So it seems to me, you know, since this has flooded three times in the last 2 years, doing some of these flood mitigation projects is going to be absolutely essential, which is why we passed the supplemental, \$90 billion supplemental bill to deal with some of these flood mitigation projects.

You know, I think, again, an ounce of prevention is a pound of cure, and I know the Governor sees this the same way. When we have discussed this project he agree with me that it would be the No. 1 priority in the State in terms of flood mitigation.

Where is the Governor on this? I think you mentioned something about your first three projects have now been approved. Can you tell me what those are? Then what, in your view, will happen with I think both the refortification of Barker Addicks and also the third reservoir?

Mr. CLAY. Sure. Well, let me first say the Governor completely agrees with you that in order to really rebuild after Harvey, you know, a large portion of what we are going to have to do are these major scale projects that, as you mentioned, three floods in the last 2 years, major floods in the last 2 years.

In Houston they have actually had 26 since the year 2000 in Houston and 9 Federally-declared disasters in Houston. So projects of this scale are going to have to happen.

As for the announcements later today, they are from the Hazard Mitigation Fund, which is the money, it is about \$1.1 billion, that we get under the Stafford Act as sort of a, you know, add-on. They will be helping fund a study, a regional study in the Houston area for a watershed assessment to look at what we can do, particularly in sort of the Montgomery County, northeast Houston area.

It will be for home buyouts throughout the Harris County flood control district. It will be to start the process, engineering and study for dredging of the San Jacinto River.

As for the third reservoir, obviously it is a huge priority for the Governor, and it is our understanding that we are, you know, going to be able to get this off the ground by doing a study first and then hopefully follow it up because of your work and the appropriation follow-up with getting it built.

Chairman MCCAUL. Right, and, you know, we, I think, did our work in the Congress. We got \$90 billion appropriated and Army Corps of Engineers.

You know, let me just close because I know it is getting late in the day, but I would look forward to continuing to work with the Governor and your office, sir, on making this a priority. I think getting the Army Corps moving faster than they normally do, we put language in the supplemental that requires them to expedite some of these projects.

We already had studies done on Barker Addicks, but a study has never been done on Cypress. So that makes it even more critical to try to move forward as expeditiously as possible, so we can get it done. Because a study takes a while, the construction takes time and I don't think this west Harris County, you know, area can wait 10 years for this.

Mr. CLAY. Yes, sir, and let me say we completely agree with getting the Army Corps to move faster than it normally does as the Governor was here about 3 weeks ago and sat down with General Semonite and his team over there.

So we are going to continue to work with them to make sure that this project and all the other ones that are needed get done as quickly as possible.

Chairman MCCAUL. OK.

Mr. CLAY. I mean, we are committed to working with you and the Army Corps to make sure that happens.

Chairman MCCAUL. Likewise. Likewise.

The Chair recognizes Ms. Sheila Jackson Lee.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I thank the Chairman and the Ranking Member for, again, their leadership and acknowledge the fact that in particular Mr. Clay, the Texas delegation worked extensively hard. As a senior member the Homeland Security Committee, it was the experience that I have gained from a series of hurricanes, those in our jurisdiction, but as well throughout the Nation, that I hope help bring to bear the urgency.

I introduced the first relief bill, which was for \$174 billion. I was not far off. In fact, the Governor supported the introduction. It had 43 co-sponsors. I am glad as to where we are, but we are not finished, and frankly, I think the \$174 billion is a closer mark than where we are.

I hope we will continue advocating for continued relief as we do so for others who are similarly situated from Puerto Rico to the Virgin Islands to Florida and others.

Disaster has to be a Federal responsibility working with our local leaders from the State to the cities and counties. I hope you agree with that?

Mr. CLAY. Absolutely, yes, ma'am.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. In the course of that, and I have read your statement and noted, as the Chairman made mention of the changing map, the fact that you have a map that so much rain fell that we had to update the color charts.

I remember looking at those, charts in the command center where the mayor was and then George R. Brown. That is the one that you had.

In fact, we couldn't discern the boundaries of Harris County or Houston or anywhere else. There were some places where we were just simply an ocean. I think people had to be there to understand the catastrophic nature of it.

So I raise this point as we are beginning to work, I guess it would be on the second half, which is long-term recovery. What I would like to have is the input of the Governor on hopefully working with the Chairman and Ranking Member.

We all have ideas, but beginning to, mine is being written as we speak, over the years of experience, and that is FEMA in the immediate rescue, and I just want to put it in that term, rushing in, dealing with the immediate rescue, folk on the ground coming in, shelters, and then long-term recovery, which is what I am seeing in northeast Houston, Kashmere Gardens, and a number of other pockets of my community. People are still suffering.

What is your thought about that? That would be really on the second phase of where the Governor is now. People are in hotels. They need housing. People housing are still in bad condition. What do you think about structuring along with some amendments on the Stafford Act?

I realize that, but that there is a bifurcation so we know when we are in the Federal long-term recovery period?

Mr. CLAY. Well, we couldn't agree more that it is not going fast enough, and that is true in Houston and throughout the whole region. I think, you know, one of the things and, you know, I would have to see the details a little bit closer, what Administrator Long said earlier about grants directly to the State.

I think that it has the potential to make things go more quickly with one caveat which is it would have to free the State up from all the compliance issues that are 2 CFR and some of the other Stafford Act requirements.

That sounds scary, but we have got to and you know that this, Congresswoman, but we have ample laws and procurement and risk law to protect against fraud, waste, and abuse in State statute that we would still comply with.

But right now, as it stands, as we go through this long-term recovery process we are not only trying to comply with the local and State laws and regulations, but also the massive 2 CFR that governs FEMA's response.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Well, let me as the announcements, as I heard and I am sorry that my colleagues are in Washington as the Governor's making announcement, but we congratulate him. We worked very hard on the watershed study. I have had that submitted over the years and very grateful that we got it in again. That is what they are operating under.

Of course, the buyout, I think there should be major announcement so that both inner city and rural areas and urban areas are aware of that potential through the local government.

Let me quickly thank Save the Children. I worked closely with you and your work and the children are vital. You worked with me. You were at a big event that I had in Houston during the Christmas holidays when children were still suffering.

To the gentleman from Florida, let me quickly ask would a reordering—and I will just ask these two questions—would a reordering of FEMA so there is a part that is long-term recovery that they can deal with and move kind-of quickly on the long-term recovery be helpful to you?

To the legislator from Puerto Rico, I am stunned about politicians and partisanship because I know that Congressional persons, Republicans and Democrats came to Puerto Rico with the greatest sincerity. I am planning on being there in the next couple of months and didn't see any partisanship; just a cry for help.

So if you can answer that but to the gentleman from Florida, would that be helpful to you? Would it be helpful that when your constituents apply for FEMA and they get that 33-5, there is so much red tape that people are struggling and can't get it. Give them the 33-5 and let them provide documentation because you are denying them on little problem of documentation.

But would the long-term recovery be helpful to you if there was a process so that it could be a focus after we have done all the initial rescuing?

Mr. MAUL. Yes, ma'am, of course. I think we saw something encouraging come out of the Federal Government in the last couple years, and that is the National Disaster Recovery Framework. All of the same collaboration that we bring to the table in an actual response is now expected on the back side during a recovery operation.

In our joint field office down in Orlando, Florida, we were thrilled to have a whole host of Federal partners there at the table with us Day 1 after the storm looking to put together a long-term recovery strategy, looking across the Federal Government at grant

programs, how we could leverage those programs in our communities to provide a more holistic approach to our recovery.

It was the first time we ever implemented it in Florida. I think one of the first times in the country that it has been done, and we would continue to want to develop that process in our own State partnership with that process.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. So the Federal Government helping you by continuing a long-term approach would be helpful to you?

Mr. MAUL. Yes, sir. I mean, yes, ma'am.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Then last, to the gentleman, we care about Puerto Rico as we do the Virgin Islands. I can't name one politician that might have come in and been grandstanding. We care. We cried. We want to keep fighting with you. Well, who was being—I don't understand your point.

Mr. MELÉNDEZ-ORTIZ. Well, my point is very simply, you know, this hearing is about lessons learned.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Right.

Mr. MELÉNDEZ-ORTIZ. We have, you know, during all this issue of recovery effort of Irma and Maria, you know, we have to struggle on the local level and within the Federal Government, you know, with the issue of politics.

You know, I know local politics, the Puerto Rico politics, are not entirely understood on a Federal level, and they should not be part of this discussion. But it is important that, you know, we, the Puerto Ricans, we, you know, we move as a whole, as as a people, you know? Everyone was touched by this storm.

The fact that, the fact that some of them at the local level and at the Federal level actually tried to gain, you know, political recognition using, you know, the pain and suffering of all people, you know, it is shameful.

But I don't want to leave—you know, I am not here to be naming names. I am just trying to state that that was one of the lessons that we learned down in Puerto Rico.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Well, I will just conclude by saying everyone on this panel I know are here supporting you and wanting to—

Mr. MELÉNDEZ-ORTIZ. I thank you for that.

Ms. JACKSON LEE [continuing]. Work very hard to—

Mr. MELÉNDEZ-ORTIZ. I thank you.

Ms. JACKSON LEE [continuing]. Develop and to find solutions to Puerto Rico. I just want to honestly say all of the Federal Members of Congress that I have encountered I have never heard a cry of politics. I have heard a cry for help, and I want to encourage them because their cry for help is generating help for all of you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back. Thank you.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentlelady yields back.

Mr. Donovan is recognized.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Noticing how long we have been here and the time I would just like to ask the four of you if you could submit to our committee recommendations that you have. Each of you experienced a different devastation, a different disaster, a different population of people you were trying to help.

So it would be real helpful to us if you could tell us what worked, what didn't work in a small—we don't need an elaborate report.

But if you could just submit to us—if we have it in writing and your suggestions for us, that would be very helpful for us to act and to help you prepare for and respond to the next disaster that you face.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back the remainder of my time. I thank all of you.

Ms. DE MARRAIS. Thank you.

Chairman MCCAUL. We thank you for yielding back the remainder of your time.

[Laughter.]

Chairman MCCAUL. Ms. Demings is recognized.

Mrs. DEMINGS. Great, thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses for being here today. Yes, we have been here for a little while, but thank you so much for taking our questions.

My question is for you, Mr. Maul. You know how important Federal and State partnerships are to our response and trying to make sure that it is adequate and appropriate a response.

As you know, Hurricane Irma had a tremendous impact on Florida, even on central Florida where I represent thousands, including medically vulnerable individuals who were without power for several days.

Homes in the Orlo Vista area, in the Orlando area, were flooded and though many lost their possessions, they did survive. We are certainly thankful for that.

While you were not the director at the time of Hurricane Irma, it is my understanding that you did serve as the chief of staff, the position that did not exist prior to your service, I believe. As a chief of staff I am sure you are aware of the needlessly tragic events that resulted in more than a dozen deaths at the rehabilitation center in Hollywood Hills.

As a Floridian who has weathered my share of hurricanes, I understand that the power goes out. Mine did as well. It can take some time to be restored, and we do have to be reasonable and understanding in that area.

But I also know that vulnerable populations like seniors and seriously ill or mobility-restricted individuals require accommodations that you or I would want certainly if we were in their place.

Yet it took, I believe, 3 days to evacuate 140 patients in Florida's September heat with no air conditioning, to move them right across the street to a hospital there.

So my question for you, Mr. Maul, is: Now that you are the emergency management director, what steps have you taken or are you taking to ensure that proper communications channels are in place to prevent tragedies like the one in Hollywood Hills?

Mr. MAUL. Yes, ma'am, thank you. Obviously taking care of our vulnerable populations that are medically dependent is not only a priority of ours, but it is a priority of everybody in our State.

First and foremost, as it relates to power restoration, that has been a huge focus. We know in Florida that if you get the power back on most of your other problems goes away. The Government can get out of the recovery business and local communities can more quickly recover.

So we have been making huge strides in that. Like I said before, we understood the largest power restoration in American history. We got to about 100 percent restoration in less than a week.

We have created strategic partnerships with Health and Human Services up here in the District of Columbia. They have been able to provide us critical information of data they have on individuals who are dependent on medical equipment for—I mean, electrical equipment for their medical needs.

We are able to do proactive callouts to check in on those folks. We provide that information to our communities so that they can do proactive callouts in the immediate aftermath to see if they need to be evacuated.

Mrs. DEMINGS. I am sorry, could you go over the equipment that you provided? What is the equipment that you provided?

Mr. MAUL. Not providing equipment.

Mrs. DEMINGS. OK. What—

Mr. MAUL. It is a list of people that HHS has been able to provide us—

Mrs. DEMINGS. OK.

Mr. MAUL [continuing]. Of people who are dependent on the electrical equipment for medical needs.

Mrs. DEMINGS. OK.

Mr. MAUL. We are able to find out in the immediate aftermath who those individuals are and do a proactive reach-out to see do you have power? Do we need to transport you somewhere so you have power for your medical supplies?

Obviously the investigation that is on-going down in south Florida, I know that there is a criminal investigation going on, and I do believe that the local medical examiner has ruled those a homicide. However, the Governor has taken some very aggressive steps to make sure that situations like this don't ever happen again.

Mrs. DEMINGS. Could you go over some for examples of those steps, not just dealing with the investigation. I understand—

Mr. MAUL. Yes.

Mrs. DEMINGS [continuing]. An on-going investigation, but it could happen this hurricane season. So what steps have been taken to ensure that it doesn't?

Mr. MAUL. We have required that all medical facilities have the ability to sustain power in the immediate aftermath, whether it be through generators, direct tap-ins to natural gas so for an extended period of time in the aftermath of a storm they are able to support that capability.

We are also working on our sheltering plans to make sure that we have adequate special needs shelter space. A lot of what we saw in the aftermath of Irma, or leading up to Irma, was that we had an inadequacy in planning at the local level as it related to the special needs planning.

So there were facilities that were literally putting people on transports and just dropping them off at special needs shelters and that was their disaster plan. So we are looking at reorganizing those to make sure that we have partnerships between facilities for the transport of those individuals.

Then lately, we are really working with our local communities to make sure they have a handle on what facilities are in their jurisdictions and how we can best support them.

Mrs. DEMINGS. OK. Thank you so much.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentlelady yields.

Before I turn the gavel over to Sheriff Rutherford, I just want to thank all three of you for being here today and your service. Yes, I thought I said all of you.

[Laughter.]

Chairman MCCAUL. Thanks to all of you for your service and both in hurricane relief and also saving the children. That is God's work on earth and just so at last we can conclude, I think a common thread that I heard between the three of you is a lot of red tape, needs to be better streamlined, maybe more control given back to the States.

I think that is what the Administrator Brock Long was talking about and how to maybe block grants administered to the States to get more flexibility, let things move faster. Don't let it get bottlenecked up.

So as we move forward on this committee, your input will be very important if we look at legislation to help make the response and recovery more efficient and effective.

So with that, I yield.

I turn it over to Sheriff Rutherford.

Mr. RUTHERFORD [presiding]. Yes. Well, that was perfect timing because now I get to recognize myself for 5 minutes.

[Laughter.]

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Mr. Meléndez, if I could ask you, I know on page No. 3 of your written comments it talks about the need to make necessary adjustments to adapt our emergency preparedness and recovery efforts to more effective and efficient response.

No. 1 on that list of what to do is actually to ensure rapid response by sea and air, including waiving or eliminating the cabotage laws, the Jones Act for ocean vessels.

So I wanted to point out I believe somewhere between 75 percent and 80 percent of Puerto Rico's goods come through foreign vessels and about 25 percent of Jones Act vessels. That the President did, in fact, waive the Jones Act.

Mr. MELÉNDEZ-ORTIZ. Did he?

Mr. RUTHERFORD. There was some controversy and this might have been what you were referring to. There was some controversy about the President being slow in waiving the Jones Act and the impact that that was having on recovery.

I would like to point out that my calculations show that the President waived the Jones Act exactly 1 day later than he did for Harvey in Texas. Fact of the matter is after waiving the Jones Act exactly one foreign vessel sailed from an American port into Puerto Rico.

So for folks who point to the Jones Act and cabotage laws as a somehow slowing down the response, I think, No. 1, is it is incorrect as I believe you do as well.

No. 2, it is very misleading in the fact that I take great pride in the fact that the American maritime industry, particularly our

Jones Act vessels under TOTE and Crowley in Jacksonville are really—I looked at them as the first responders, the first maritime responders for Puerto Rico because they have that, you know, they call it the milk run.

They do it so often they have that built-in efficiency and effectiveness. So they had actually pre-positioned goods at our port so that they could get them to San Juan more quickly and in fact, that was accomplished in a very, very quick fashion.

So I—

Mr. MELÉNDEZ-ORTIZ. Well, the only reason that it is on my statement, you know, the reference to the cabotage and the Jones Act is because of the controversy that, you know, public inquiry whether it was the right timing when the President actually gave the waiver. So that is why it is on the statement.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. OK, but I just want to make sure that you are not laying out a case that somehow the Jones Act slowed down the response—

Mr. MELÉNDEZ-ORTIZ. No, no, no, not at all. Not at all.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. I just wanted to make that clear.

Mr. MAUL we had discussed earlier and I don't know if other States have this issue, but I know in Florida a lot of municipalities and other Governmental agencies we had these pre-arranged contracts with providers, contractors to take the debris out of our neighborhoods.

I just want to ask what do you think we can do to make them honor those contracts when they leave those contracts that they made pre-storm at a much lower price, by the way, so they can get the contract and once the storm hits they go to other localities where they can make more money.

I would call on our Attorney General Pam Bondi to look at that because to me that sounds like gouging maybe. I know she is on top of that. So what do you think about that?

Mr. MAUL. So you asked whether other States have experienced the same thing, and sir, the answer is yes. If you look at all of the recent Congressional after-action reports that have come out of major storms over the past couple decades, all of them highlight debris contracting as a significant issue coming out of major storms.

We saw significant differences in the negotiated pre-disaster cubic yardage price some as low as, what, \$5 whereas, you know, after disaster hits negotiated prices go up—or renegotiated prices were, you know, going up to \$20 a cubic yard.

We also saw a significant pressure being put on individuals to try and suggest that the Army Corps should take over the entire debris mission, some of which, you know, would have cost taxpayers 10 times as much—

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Exactly.

Mr. MAUL [continuing]. With no significant expediency, you know, increased time line because of the fact that many of the same contractors were both in the pre-disaster contract—

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Right.

Mr. MAUL [continuing]. Business and working for the Army Corps. You know, I am very proud of the steps that our Governor took to draw a line in the sand and to make sure that we weren't

creating a bidding war in our State and that we weren't going to stand for those types of practices happening to our citizens.

Moving forward, you know, I think we need to take a look at this as a profession. I think that until kind-of States and communities stand together with our Federal partners and say we are not just going to stand for this anymore, it is going to continue to happen.

I think that we need to work on more education and we are in Florida with our local partners about the risks of some of this and certain provisions and best practices for their contracts.

I think we need to kind-of crack open the books on the contracts we currently have and make sure the expectations that have been set are actually going to be honored.

We need to be putting together, we are actually putting together in some of our rural counties, teams of locals and contractors who are willing to do the work for that county themselves with internal capacity, which will help not only with a faster response to the debris clean-up but also reinvest that money in local communities.

Then last, I know the attorney general is taking a look at it, but we ourselves are also working with communities to take a look at last year's actions and see whether or not we were dealing with any bad actors.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Very good. Thank you for that.

I have several other questions, but we don't have time for that.

I do want to congratulate you, though. I think Florida had a very good response. Some areas, obviously, that we needed to look at and these storms clearly highlighted that need. So but thank you for working with us.

Mr. MAUL. Thank you, sir.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. I want to thank all the witnesses. My time is up.

As I mentioned, I want to thank all the witnesses for their testimony and the Members for their questions. The Members of the committee may have some additional questions for the witnesses and we will ask you to respond to these in writing if you don't mind?

Pursuant to committee rule VII(D), the hearing—

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Chairman? Mr. Chairman, before you— here I am.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Oh, I am sorry.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. As a sitting Ranking Member I want to make sure that I have an opportunity to close for a moment before you gavel us out?

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Shoot. Go ahead.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you. First of all, let me thank our Chairman and Ranking Member for this, I think, very thoughtful and important hearing.

We know, Representative, that Puerto Rico had warehouses where people were not there to process and so we know that learning from all of you we can be better prepared, and we can work together.

To Save the Children, let me thank you again for coming under the new legislation, but more importantly, standing up for children and certainly we saw you in the State of Texas. I know that you were in many other places.

As it relates to Florida and Congressman Rutherford's question, we thought the debris removers were leaving Texas to go to Florida, so we have to get our handle around how we in simultaneous hurricanes that we are able to address this question because we were struggling. We were fearful that everyone would move in that direction, but you needed help. We all need help.

Let me thank Mr. Clay, and please convey to the Governor and State officials the appreciation for their eagerness and collaboration and constant contact.

I know that my county judge, a mayor in Houston and I know the mayors and county judges throughout the State, were most appreciative. We were huddled together in many meetings. We were on tarmacs. We were in meetings in places that were uncomfortable, but we know that our people are still uncomfortable. So I just want to leave you with this to the Governor.

We are grateful that we were able to send \$89 billion or \$90 billion that we have a large share of. We need to work with the Governor to help to expedite a number of projects. Greens Bayou was already being worked on, but I would like it expedited and then we are working on certainly some other projects from Halls to others. So if you can help us with that.

Then if you would help us on the issue of working with FEMA for them to address the denials. Denials have been done on typos and we have too many people in need.

My last point is I think we should convene a meeting shortly for the 2018 hurricane season. We may be lucky, all of us may be lucky, but I think the idea of Members of Congress sitting in that meeting and representative local officials in that meeting would be very, very helpful because, as you well know, we are still proceeding with appropriations. What do we need to do? How do we need to prepare our communities?

We can't really predict the future. We can look at the models, but it is evidence, I guess, the map is evidence that we saw something in 2017 that we had never seen before.

So thank you to all of the witnesses in the first panel, second panel. I think this is wake-up call for us to get prepared as we go into 2018.

I thank you to the Chairman, and I yield back.

Thank you all very much. Please convey my appreciation to all of the local leaders.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Thank you. I apologize for the oversight. I—

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Not at all, Congressman.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. If you would, Mr. Maul, also let Governor Rick Scott know that I am very appreciative of the great job that he did at the State level. I am very proud of Florida's response, both State, local, and Federal. Our National Guard did a fantastic job, our Coast Guard, so thank them as well.

Mr. MAUL. I will.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. We are really thanking everybody so let me ditto the Coast Guard, the National Guard—

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Yes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. [continuing]. And let me call out the county judge in Harris County and our Mayor Turner, who did a fantastic job. We all have to go home.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. That is right. That is right.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. But they did a fantastic job. Thank you so very much—and the Coast Guard. They are our wings of angels.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Absolutely.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you.

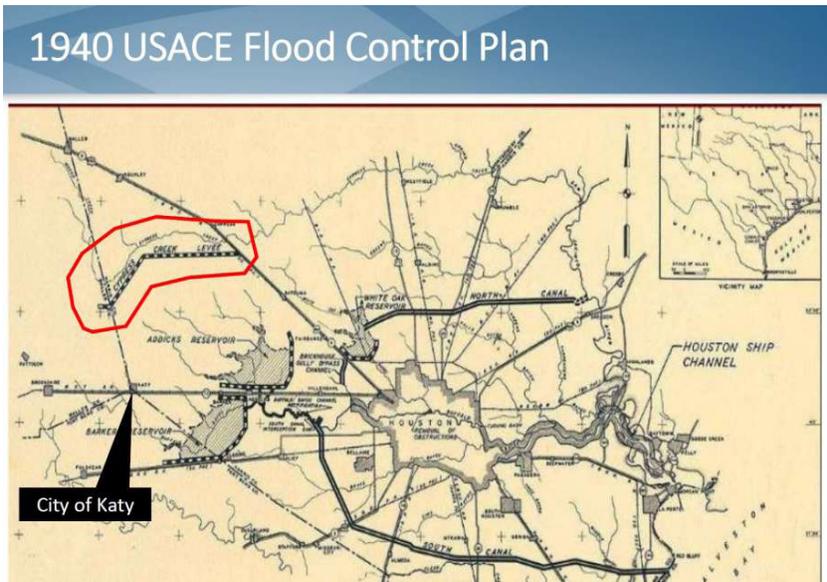
Mr. RUTHERFORD. They are fantastic. So pursuant to committee rule VII(D), the hearing record will be open for 10 days.

With that, without objection, the committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 2:03 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX I

MAP SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY CHAIRMAN MICHAEL T. McCAUL



APPENDIX II

QUESTIONS FROM RANKING MEMBER BENNIE G. THOMPSON FOR DONALD E. "ED"
JACKSON, JR.

Question 1a. What is the status of the Corps' power line restoration efforts in Puerto Rico?

Answer. As of March 15, 2018, approximately 93 percent of the customers on the island that were able to receive power before the storm now have electrical power. The Corps power restoration contractors are working in parallel with the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA) and its contractors. As of March 15, 2018, the Corps contractors have been assigned responsibility for installing 231 distribution lines, 114 Sub-transmission (38 kV) lines, and 26 transmission lines, or in total, 371 power lines. Corps contractors, in coordination with PREPA, installed nine small power plants, or micro grids, to provide temporary power to communities while grid power is being restored. Currently, three micro grids are operational at Arecibo, Culebra, and Vieques.

Question 1b. How well-equipped was the Corps to provide contract support and oversight of the process?

Answer. The Corps has solicited and awarded three construction contracts for the power restoration mission in Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria. To expedite the process, the Corps obtained Army Senior Procurement Executive approval of Justification and Approvals for Other than Full and Open Competition, in place of the normal competitive procedures. The Corps assigned an engineer to monitor and oversee performance of the contract awarded to PowerSecure, Inc. and the two contracts awarded to Fluor Enterprises, Inc. In addition, the Corps set up offices in Aguadilla and San Juan staffed with an engineer responsible for contract oversight as well as other contracting and quality assurance staff to monitor performance of contractor crews. The Corps performs this work as directed by FEMA under Emergency Support Function No. 3, Public Works and Engineering.

Question 1c. What is the status of the two major power restoration contractors, PowerSecure and Fluor?

Answer. Fluor has demobilized all work execution assets from the Island, and the period of performance ends on April 18, 2018. PowerSecure's period of performance on its existing contract expires on April 7, 2018, and a Justification & Approval has been executed and approved to extend the performance through May 18, 2018.

Question 1d. Will the impending drawdown of contractors slow the pace of the restoration effort?

Answer. No. The remaining crews available on the island are capable of completing the power restoration efforts in accordance with the current plan. On March 15, 2018, there were 846 Corps contractors working on transmission, sub-transmission, and distribution lines. The impending drawdown did not affect the pace of the restoration effort, as that was taken into account during the planning phase of the restoration effort and progress was monitored daily. Additionally, on March 29, 2018, FEMA provided the Corps additional authorization to modify the PowerSecure Inc. contract to continue work through May 18, 2018. This extension will allow PowerSecure to maintain personnel, equipment, and materials on the island, in order to continue the repair of hurricane-damaged electrical lines particularly in the hardest-hit and most remote areas in accordance with the Unified Command Group's plan.

Question 1e. When can we expect those still without power, 6 months after the storm, to have it restored?

Answer. The Corps is working with FEMA, PREPA, and Puerto Rico's Restoration Coordinator to restore power to the island. This joint effort is guided by PREPA's Restoration Master Plan priorities. As of March 15, 2018, approximately 93 percent of the customers on the island that were able to receive power before the storm now have electrical power. We also know that approximately 107,000 customers remain

without power, particularly in the hardest-hit and most remote areas, and we are committed and are working to restore their power.

Question 2a. Restoration of power in Puerto Rico has been a challenge since Hurricane Maria hit in September. What role did USACE have in the procurement of electric grid component material for power restoration in Puerto Rico?

Answer. FEMA tasked the Corps to procure all Bills of Materials (BOM: wires, connectors, poles, transformers, etc.) to support temporary repairs to system segments and to provide these materials to Corps contractors, PREPA internal crews, PREPA contractors, the New York State Contingent, and the Mutual Assistance utilities. The Corps executed contracts through the Defense Logistics Agency to procure the required materials, based on technical assessments executed by PREPA and supporting contractors and utility companies. At this point, material delivery is keeping up with the assessed needs.

Question 2b. Did USACE develop new procurement and contracting arrangements or was the agency able to leverage existing arrangements?

Answer. While the Corps did not have any advance contracts in place specifically for power grid restorations, it was able to utilize two existing contractual arrangements and also issued one new contract for this mission assignment.

First, under two existing contracting arrangements, which were in place before Hurricane Maria, the Corps issued a Rapid Disaster Infrastructure Multiple Award Task Order Contract (RDI MATOC) for emergency power generation; and a Resilient Power and Mechanical Systems Basic Ordering Agreement (RPMS BOA) for actual repair and restoration of the power grid lines and associated structures:

- Under the RDI MATOC, the Corps awarded two task orders to provide immediate power on a temporary basis. The first was awarded to Weston Solutions on October 8, 2017, to install and operate 50 MW of emergency power generation at the Palo Seco Power Plant near San Juan, PR. The second was awarded on November 7, 2017, to Aptim for emergency power generation at the Yabucoa Power Plant near Yabucoa.
- Under the RPMS BOA, the Corps awarded two task orders to repair the power lines and associated structures of the power grid. The first was a noncompetitive task order valued at \$240 million, issued to Fluor Enterprises, Inc. on October 12, 2017. Due to the magnitude of the damage to the power grid, the value of this task order was increased by \$265 million to \$505 million. The second was competed amongst the BOA holders and resulted in an award of a second task order to Fluor Enterprises, Inc. in the amount of \$495 million.

Second, to further supplement power grid restoration efforts, the Corps awarded a new sole source contract to PowerSecure, Inc. (PowerSecure) in the amount of \$40 million dollars on October 18, 2017. The Corps subsequently increased the value and duration of the PowerSecure grid restoration contract by modification to a value of \$370 million and a required end date of April 7, 2018. This modification was effective on February 14, 2018.

Question 3a. How was procured material distributed or otherwise shared across USACE contractors, the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA), and PREPA contractors?

Answer. The manner of procured material distribution changed depending on the phase of response. The Corps used the Department of Defense material invoicing and distribution process to account for material distributed to Corps contractors, PREPA line crews and contractors, and investor-owned utility companies supporting the repair effort. The majority of procured material was sent by the Defense Logistics Agency or vendor to one of three ports in the continental United States for travel on ship or barge. Ports were located in Texas, South Carolina, and Florida. From these ports the material was sent to laydown yards or warehouses operated by the Corps in Puerto Rico. The material was distributed to contractors or PREPA from these locations. Prioritization for distribution of material was determined using guidance from the Unified Command Group. This prioritization assisted in determining how the Corps distributed material amongst PREPA and contractors.

Prior to requisition, contractors and PREPA performed assessments of damaged lines to determine the material needs. Once the contractor's requisition was reviewed and approved, the materials were either delivered to the contractor's lay down yard or the contractor would pick up the requisitioned material from the Corps yards and warehouses.

Question 3b. What lessons can be drawn from the procurement of materials and their distribution in Puerto Rico for future Federal disaster response?

Answer. The Corps will participate in and contribute to discussions among the Federal agencies on lessons learned from the disaster response following Hurricane Maria, including on the procurement and distribution of materials for use in an area like Puerto Rico.

Following the impacts of Hurricane Maria, PREPA's automated inventory control and management system was inoperable. In addition, prior to the storm, the utility did not have adequate records of its equipment and supplies. Consequently, the Corps working with PREPA had to conduct physical inventories of all materials in Puerto Rico in order to determine what materials were already on hand and what materials were needed to accomplish the task of repairing the electrical grid. Moreover, due to the catastrophic nature of the damages, individual line assessments of the entire grid system had to be performed by PREPA, its contractors, as well as the Corps' contractors to determine the actual requirements for each damaged line segment for the emergency repair of the entire grid. This laborious inventory process took weeks to establish the initial emergency order of materials and the following months to finalize subsequent orders to accurately and effectively order required materials as individual line assessments were completed across Puerto Rico. Additionally, logistical challenges to the island presented by the geographical separation from the mainland, limited modes of transportation available for shipping in much-needed materials. Though now largely overcome with refined needs assessments, better visibility of PREPA stocks, expedited material production and delivery, and the combination of factors above did make the identification, acquisition, and delivery of materials (poles, wire, transformers, etc.) a significant limiting factor. To date, the Corps has received 30.96 million pieces of materials.

Due to other natural disasters in Texas, Florida, and California, there was limited inventory of utility materials, especially in the large quantities required. The Defense Production Act (DPA) was used to expedite the manufacture and supply of materials used in the emergency repairs of the electrical grid in Puerto Rico. In this case, DPA authorities are available to support: Emergency preparedness activities conducted pursuant to title VI of the Stafford Act; and protection or restoration of critical infrastructure. Manufacturers are fabricating supplies as quickly as possible and, as they fabricate the needed materials, they are being shipped expeditiously to Puerto Rico. In addition, there are a number of unique materials incorporated into Puerto Rico's electrical grid system (insulators are unique with limited manufacturers, transformers with multiple voltages, unique conductor sizes, etc.), further complicating the resourcing and acquisition, given the large quantities of the items required to restore the system. An additional factor in material assessment and acquisition was PREPA's delay in accepting industry recommendations for acceptable substitutes; e.g., use of more available 69 kV post insulators versus less available 38 kV post insulators and use of 1192 bunting (industry standard) versus 1192 "Puerto Rican special" bunting. The Corps and PREPA have also utilized partnerships with industry to order supplies from their inventory.

Question 4. When the capacity and capabilities of Federal and State agencies are nearly exhausted by natural disasters, the Department of Defense (DOD) is a crucial partner in providing support through the Defense Support for Civil Authorities (DSCA) mission. Are there any lessons that you learned about how DOD can better assist civil authorities when requested?

Answer. The Secretary of Defense pre-approved the deployment of life-saving and life-sustaining support and authorized the transfer of forces to the Commander, USNORTHCOM. This allowed DoD capability to be provided as swiftly as possible. DoD will continue to maintain an extensive network of embedded liaison officers at the Federal and State level who enhanced unity of effort ensured visibility of requests for assistance and set realistic expectations for mission accomplishment.

QUESTION FROM HONORABLE NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ FOR DONALD E. "ED" JACKSON, JR.

Question. On October 18, 2017, USACE (Jacksonville District) announced a \$40 million contract award to PowerSecure Inc. for grid restoration work in Puerto Rico (Contract No. W912EP-18-C-0003). On November 11, 2017, USACE (South Atlantic Division) announced its intent to increase PowerSecure's contract by \$48 million, from \$40 million to \$88 million. On Friday, March 23, 2017 at 8:12 p.m., USACE (Jacksonville District) announced its intent to award a sole-source modification to increase the PowerSecure contract ceiling by \$200 million. The notice goes on to describe the existing contract as having a current value of \$390 million (excludes the proposed \$200 million increase). There is no public record of how and when USACE increased the PowerSecure contract from \$88 million to \$390 million.

Please describe the procurement method USACE applied to increase the PowerSecure contract from \$88 million to \$390 million, and identify the statute and/or regulation authorizing this course of action.

Answer. On December 1, 2017, the Senior Procurement Executive for the U.S. Army approved a Justification & Approval (J&A) to increase the award amount of the PowerSecure contract from \$88 million to \$390 million.

The nature and extent of the damage to the power grid was not fully known at the time of award in October 2017. Later, as the extent of the effort that would be needed to restore power became more apparent, FEMA directed several changes to the Corps mission assignment over the course of the contract performance period. In response, the Contracting Officer modified the PowerSecure contract to extend all distribution line repair resources through April 7, 2018. The increases in value and duration of the PowerSecure contract were made incrementally to allow both the Corps and PowerSecure the ability to better plan, track, and deploy resources. The Contracting Officer also improved PowerSecure's on-site power grid restoration capability by mobilizing additional transmission line repair personnel and equipment. Although the J&A authorized up to \$390 million, the contract itself was only increased to \$370 million. The remaining amount was held in reserve to settle equitable adjustments and/or other differing conditions that may be identified during actual performance of the power grid restoration.

The J&A was approved under the authority cited in Title 10 United States Code (U.S.C.) 2304(c)(2) as implemented by FAR 6.302-2, "Unusual and Compelling Urgency."

The process followed for the approval and subsequent increase in the contract value for PowerSecure is based on the authority cited in the J&A. Specifically, FAR 5.202(a)(2) states that the notice that generally would be required by FAR 5.201 is not required when proposed contract action is made under the conditions described in FAR 6.302-2.

QUESTIONS FROM CHAIRMAN MICHAEL T. MCCAUL FOR JOHN V. KELLY

Question 1a. Your office recently notified FEMA that 12 reports related to FEMA's disaster response activities under the Obama administration were being withdrawn because they "may have lacked sufficient and appropriate evidence to support conclusions in the reports." How did this happen? And, what actions led to the discovery of these substandard reports?

Answer. The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform raised concerns about a specific DHS OIG audit report, *FEMA's Initial Response to the 2016 Catastrophic Flooding in Louisiana* (OIG-17-80-D). The committee's own investigation of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) response to the flooding in Louisiana led it to question the conclusion in our report that the initial response was generally effective. We conducted an internal quality assurance review of the audit and concluded that it was not compliant with generally accepted Government auditing standards. We removed the report permanently from our website and notified FEMA that it should place no reliance on the report.

Because of the issues that we identified with the report, we undertook a broader review of all reports of this particular type, designed to evaluate whether FEMA's initial response to disasters was effective. This broader review revealed that the reports may not have adequately answered objectives and, in some cases, may have lacked sufficient and appropriate evidence to support conclusions. In an abundance of caution, we determined it was best to recall the reports and not re-issue them.

We have already begun to implement corrective actions to address known factors contributing to the deficiencies in these reports. We continue to evaluate the broader circumstances surrounding these reports to better understand what happened and why. We will be pleased to report back to the committee when that evaluation is complete.

Question 1b. What steps are you taking to ensure the accuracy of this kind of reporting going forward?

Answer. We have already taken a number of actions to improve both the development of our staff and the quality of our work. As of October 2017, we reintegrated the Offices of Audits and Emergency Management Oversight with the goal of providing staff greater diversity of work to enhance the quality of their products. Additionally, we have developed a new approach to how we will report on our activities when we deploy auditors to disaster areas in the immediate aftermath of disasters, known internally as Emergency Management Oversight Teams (EMOT). Rather than attempting to report out on EMOT activities using traditional audit reports conducted under Government Auditing Standards, we are utilizing our authorities under the Inspector General Act to issue management alerts to FEMA regarding immediate threats and emerging risks we have observed in the field. We will also continue to identify potential risk areas to be addressed by future traditional audits. We are currently following this approach with our response to Hurricanes Harvey,

Irma, Maria, and last year's California wildfires. You can find alerts that we have issued in response to these disasters on our website. As we move forward, we will continue to review and refine our products and processes to ensure we are providing accurate and timely information.

Question 1c. Can you assure this committee that these inaccuracies are confined to Emergency Management Oversight Team reports? And, are you taking action to review additional reports?

Answer. As an agency, we pride ourselves in the high quality of our work and we have a proven track record of issuing hard-hitting, high-impact reports addressing the most pressing issues facing the Department of Homeland Security. Once we identified the issues with the initial response EMOT reports, it was our responsibility to verify that the inaccuracies are confined to this category of report. We are proactively reviewing the audits related to or based on the recalled reports so that we can confidently provide assurance to you that the scope of the problem is limited. We will report back to you upon the conclusion of that review.

Question 1d. How much time, resources, and money were wasted in support of these now invalidated reports?

Answer. We do not believe time, resources, and money were wasted in support of these reports. Rather, having audit staff deployed at each location post-disaster served as a deterrent to fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement. Our presence and fieldwork helped us identify, deter, and prevent issues before they became multi-million-dollar problems. The fieldwork associated with these reports identified additional systematic issues that resulted in further reviews. For example, our on-the-ground presence identified problems with FEMA's FQS qualification system, instances where FEMA did not properly train attorneys resulting in bad procurement advice, lack of safe rooms in tornado areas, FEMA failures to spend mitigation money, and problems with not having guidance in multiple languages.

We acknowledge that in the process of reporting our observations, we did not always comply with applicable Government auditing standards. Nevertheless, the staff hours associated with these reports were productive. Staff hours includes activities such as: Teams attending daily FEMA command meetings, State applicant briefings, conducting interviews with key program FEMA and State officials, visiting disaster recovery centers, evaluating whether Joint Field Offices were set up appropriately, and receiving and referring potential fraud complaints to the proper investigative offices.

Question 1e. Your internal review noted that answering objectives with sufficient and appropriate evidence is required under Government Auditing Standards or Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation, but it has been stated that future Emergency Management Oversight Team projects will no longer be conducted under Government Auditing Standards. How does the removal of these standards impact the quality, importance, and integrity of future IG reports?

Answer. Moving forward, our goal is to produce reports that are supported with the level of evidence required to meet the rigorous auditing standards that auditors across the Federal Government follow. We believe that our new approach will produce high-impact reports adding value to the work we do.

We believe that deploying auditors as EMOTs are an important tool that we can leverage to identify and prevent waste, fraud, and abuse early on in FEMA's response. The IG Act provides the OIG with a variety of tools that can assist us in effecting positive change. As such, we have determined that using Government Auditing Standards is not the most effective way to effect positive change immediately after a disaster. As we go forward, the EMOTs will be conducted under Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation and the Inspector General Act, Section 2. We will also continue to observe and identify potential risk areas that will be addressed by future traditional audits or inspections, if necessary.

Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation are very similar to Government Auditing Standards, in that sufficient and appropriate evidence must be obtained and documented so that a reasonable person can come to the same conclusions as we did. Yet, these standards provide more flexibility to rely on observations and discussions when there is an absence of documentation, as is often the case immediately after a disaster.

The OIG strives to improve its work product to meet the needs of the agencies under review. We determined that by offering real-time feedback based on observations and analysis of on-going efforts would provide more benefit to FEMA, States, and disaster survivors—identifying issues with FEMA's response before the money is spent and they become multi-million dollar problems.

Question 2a. In your testimony, you noted that you are in the process of reviewing agreements between Texas and FEMA related to direct housing and the Partial Re-

pair and Essential Power for Sheltering (PREPS) program. What is the status of this review?

Answer. We are in the planning stages of the PREPS review.

Question 2b. When do you estimate it will be completed?

Answer. While still in its very early stages, our current estimate is that we will complete the review and issue our final report late this year or early in 2019. We will update committee staff in the event that estimate changes.

Question 3. After Hurricane Katrina, FEMA instituted controls to combat the high level of waste, fraud, and abuse in the Individual and Households Program. You noted work you are undertaking to assess fraud in that program in your testimony. Have there been improvements in FEMA's ability to combat fraud?

Answer. We currently have an on-going audit regarding FEMA's fraud prevention efforts in the Individuals and Households Program (IHP). The objective of our review is to assess the effectiveness of FEMA's Fraud Prevention and Investigation Branch in identifying and reporting potential fraud, waste, and abuse of disaster assistance funds provided under the IHP. Additionally, we are conducting a review of FEMA's verification of applicant insurance benefits for applicants for assistance under the IHP. The objective of our audit is to determine whether FEMA's IHP for home repair and reconstruction has the necessary controls in place to verify applicants' insurance coverage. Upon completion of these reviews, we should be able to assess whether there have been improvements in FEMA's ability to combat fraud.

We previously reviewed FEMA's process for verifying applicant's insurance information in a report, *FEMA Faces Challenges Verifying Applicants' Insurance Policies for the Individuals and Households Program* (OIG-16-01-D). We noted that because FEMA relies on individuals to self-certify and does not have an adequate system in place to verify the information, this poses significant risk of fraud, waste, and abuse.

At present, we have nearly 400 FEMA-related investigations open, which represents 30 percent of our agency-wide caseload. The vast majority of these investigations involve FEMA benefits fraud. We also support our FEMA investigations with specialized complaint intake, computer forensics, and fraud assessment capabilities.

QUESTIONS FROM RANKING MEMBER BENNIE G. THOMPSON FOR JOHN V. KELLY

Question 1a. On October 3, 2017, FEMA awarded a \$156 million contract to Tribute Contracting LLC to provide 30 million meals to Puerto Rico. FEMA terminated the contract on October 19 after Tribute delivered only 50,000 meals. Is your office conducting a review of this contract award?

Answer. Yes, we are currently conducting a review of FEMA's terminated Tribute Contracting LLC contract.

Question 1b. Do you know whether a FEMA contracting officer conduct a responsibility determination for Tribute Contracting LLC prior to awarding a contract?

Answer. We are looking at Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) and other guidance to determine if FEMA followed all relevant laws, regulations, and procedures in awarding the terminated contract. One of the areas we are looking into will determine whether FEMA followed the intent and spirit of FAR part 9.104-4—Subcontractor Responsibility. Particularly FAR part 9.104-4(a) states "generally, prospective prime contractors are responsible for determining the responsibility of their prospective subcontractors . . . A prospective contractor may be required to provide written evidence of a proposed subcontractor's responsibility." However, FAR 9.104-4(b) further states that "when it is in the Government's interest to do so, the contracting officer may directly determine a prospective subcontractor's responsibility (e.g., when the prospective contract involves medical supplies, urgent requirements, or substantial subcontracting)." In this case, the same standards used to determine a prime contractor's responsibility shall be used by the Government to determine subcontractor responsibility.

Question 1c. What more must FEMA do to prevent this situation in the future?

Answer. We will make recommendations to FEMA once our on-going review is complete.

Question 2a. As part of the law creating the Public Assistance Alternative Procedures, your office was required to assess the effectiveness of the alternative procedures for permanent work projects. However, this report is now overdue. Can you provide an estimate of when you will complete this important review?

Answer. We estimate our final report will be published during May 2018.

Question 2b. Has the DHS OIG conducted any audits of past Public Assistance projects that revealed concerns about how the Alternative Procedures function?

Answer. In October 2015, we reported that FEMA's program guide for the Alternative Procedures pilot program and letters of undertaking provided acceptable

guidance in most areas to ensure compliance with Federal rules and regulations.¹ However, our review of seven large-dollar-value projects valued at \$3.0 billion identified weaknesses in five areas of guidance:

1. estimating project costs;
2. responding to Office of Inspector General (OIG) audits;
3. managing cash responsibly;
4. applying insurance proceeds; and
5. obtaining insurance for future losses.

These weaknesses put Federal funds at greater risk of fraud, waste, and abuse. Correcting these weaknesses will better ensure that participants in the pilot program will follow Federal requirements when spending Federal funds. FEMA concurred with the three recommendations in the report and implemented the recommended changes.

Question 2c. Do you have any concerns about the required wide-spread use of Alternative Procedures in Puerto Rico?

Answer. We have not conducted any audit work related to Alternative Procedures in Puerto Rico; having not evaluated the specific issue in Puerto Rico, it would be premature for us to express concerns. We do plan to begin an audit shortly and look forward to sharing our results with you when the audit is complete.

Question 3. What would you say are FEMA's top challenges in addressing the aftermath of storm season 2017?

Answer. The top challenges FEMA's is facing in addressing the aftermath of the storm season 2017 are the following:

- improper procurement practices;
- duplication of benefits;
- mismanagement of disaster costs;
- privacy vulnerabilities;
- limitations in the ability to quickly protect survivors' homes and property from further damage;
- obstacles with accurate and timely home inspections;
- incomplete controls when providing Federal funds to high-risk entities; and
- inconsistent contract oversight.

Unmitigated, these challenges could delay survivors' recovery and put billions of dollars of Federal funds at risk. Thus, we have identified numerous observations and concerns and issued several lessons learned reports concerning FEMA's disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. This work highlights on-going concerns FEMA must address to ensure it effectively meets its mission and improves the efficiency and effectiveness of its programs and operations.

QUESTIONS FROM CHAIRMAN MICHAEL T. MCCAUL FOR REED CLAY

Question 1. In your testimony, you made clear that one of the most valuable lesson learned from Hurricane Harvey is that we must rebuild stronger—to “future proof” or mitigate against future damage from storms. Can you explain the importance of mitigation projects to the future of Texas and the entire country?

Answer. Of the many lessons learned following the devastation of Hurricane Harvey, the most significant tropical cyclone rainfall event in United States history both in scope and total rainfall, two lessons are perhaps the most valuable in preparing for future natural disasters.

The first lesson learned is a reaffirmation of the bonds of our humanity. The worst of storms brought out the best in humanity; Texans helped Texans, Americans helped Americans, and lives were saved.

The second lesson learned is perhaps more critical as the beginning of hurricane season again nears, with storms typically occurring between June 1 and November 30. While we cannot control Mother Nature, nor predict with certainty the path or extent of potential destruction, there are critical actions we can take—and should take—to prepare for natural disasters, to mitigate the threat to human life, our first priority, and to minimize the risk of damage to infrastructure, property, and the economic health of this State and our Nation.

Under Governor Abbott's direction, the State of Texas is focused on “future-proofing” as we rebuild in our communities impacted by Hurricane Harvey along the Texas Gulf Coast and in Houston and beyond. The State of Texas is already deploying Hazard Mitigation Grant funds—made available under the Stafford Act—throughout the affected region, prioritizing the investments in five primary areas:

- Buyouts and elevations of flood-prone properties

¹ *Clearer Guidance Would Improve FEMA's Oversight of the Public Assistance Alternative Procedures Pilot Program* (OIG-16-03-D).

- Drainage and reservoir projects that eliminate future flooding
- Projects to lessen the frequency or severity of flooding
- Flood-risk reduction projects (dams, retention basins, levees, and floodwalls)
- Large-scale channeling of waterways.

The Gulf Coast region of Texas represents a vital cog in the National economy, with our substantial petrochemical complex, international ports, and the world's largest medical center, as well as one of the Nation's most populous and economically vital cities.

Many of the projects needed to truly future proof the region will require significant Federal assistance. Much of the damage from the devastating storm and subsequent historic rainfall could have been prevented or mitigated by Federal projects that have been considered for years, such as a third reservoir in the Houston area or deepening waterways authorized for improvement. And other projects being considered—like deepening our ports and the coastal spine—may prove visionary, as they protect assets that are indispensable to our Nation's economy and National defense during the next storm.

Question 2. FEMA Administrator Long presented the committee with a strategic plan to enable FEMA to better prepare and respond to future disasters. Administrator Long constantly stresses that “success is best delivered through a system that is Federally-supported, State-managed, and locally-executed.” How do you think FEMA's strategic plan and disaster recovery system will enable Texas to better respond to future disasters?

Answer. Texas' response to Hurricane Harvey was remarkable and demonstrates the point made by Administrator Long. Though the disaster was unprecedented in recent history, so too was the aggressive advance action and close coordination of local, State, and Federal emergency management resources and personnel in the 53 Texas counties in the Presidential Disaster Declaration and 60 Texas counties in the State Disaster Declaration.

Disasters occur locally. Citizens themselves are the first line of defense, and the can-do attitude displayed during the worst of the storm and the subsequent flooding was remarkable. Reinforcing a culture of disaster preparedness is critical to ensure even more lives are saved in future storms. As we saw in each community, from our smallest coastal communities to our largest city, it was because of the courage and calm leadership of local emergency managers, elected officials, law enforcement, and first responders that so many more lives were spared. All resources of the State of Texas were also leveraged as State agencies stepped in when asked to fill the gaps and provide needed personnel, equipment, and expertise.

But responding to a major disaster such as Hurricane Harvey is not possible without Federal support. From the State of Texas' perspective, the administrator's strategic plan provides a vision that would enable Texas to respond even more effectively in the future.

First, invest today to mitigate damage from the storms to come tomorrow. That is the direction set by Governor Abbott, driving the prioritization of hazard mitigation projects across the Texas Gulf Coast and the rest of the impacted region. We must “future-proof” as we rebuild to preserve lives, infrastructure, and property—and to safeguard the economic health of the State and our Nation.

Second, remove bureaucracy. In the housing recovery initiative in particular, State and local governments already have the legal infrastructure in place to administer short- and long-term housing recovery; an additional layer of Federal requirements only serves to slow the process down. FEMA and the Federal Government should consider relaxing the regulations contained in 2 CFR for the exigent period immediately following a major disaster (e.g., 30 days), and when the Federal Government asks the State to assume responsibility and complete the housing mission, the State must be freed from FEMA regulations and permitted to execute the program itself. Such a system permits the flexibility of a locally-run program that meets the unique needs of each community. A cookie-cutter approach just doesn't work: What works in New York may not work in Texas. This streamlining also removes a layer of bureaucracy to speed up the recovery and meet our ultimate goal of getting people back in their homes more quickly.

Third, incentivize local governments to create a culture of preparedness by ensuring there is adequate personnel who are trained and who understand disaster recovery and FEMA's processes. This will facilitate the integration of existing personnel into the disaster recovery framework. But local entities must be incentivized through grants and other opportunities to create and maintain that infrastructure.

It is the balance of a locally-executed, State-managed, and Federally-funded disaster and recovery framework that will help improve the delivery of service to our citizens when they need our assistance the most.

