

**FEMA'S PRIORITIES FOR FY22 AND BEYOND:
COORDINATING MISSION, VISION, AND BUDGET**

(117-20)

REMOTE HEARING

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, AND
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

OF THE
COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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JUNE 23, 2021
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U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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JUNE 20, 2021

SUMMARY OF SUBJECT MATTER

TO: Members, Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management
FROM: Subcommittee Staff
RE: Subcommittee Hearing on “FEMA’s Priorities for FY22 and Beyond: Coordinating Mission, Vision, and Budget”

PURPOSE

The Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management will meet on Wednesday, June 23, 2021, at 2:00 p.m. in 2167 Rayburn House Office Building and via Zoom, to receive testimony from the Honorable Deanne Criswell, Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regarding “FEMA’s Priorities for FY22 and Beyond: Coordinating Mission, Vision, and Budget.”

BACKGROUND

DEVELOPMENTS SINCE OUR MOST RECENT FEMA ADMINISTRATOR HEARING

The subcommittee last received testimony from a FEMA Administrator—former Administrator Peter Gaynor—on March 11, 2020. This testimony took place two days before President Trump invoked Sec. 501(b) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act, P.L. 93–288 as amended) to issue emergency declarations for each state and territory of the United States to provide federal assistance in combatting the quickly expanding COVID–19 pandemic.¹ Subsequently, states sought major disaster declarations for expanded federal assistance, which President Trump granted to all states and territories, as well as some federally recognized tribes.²

During fiscal years (FYs) 2020 and 2021, Congress provided FEMA with significant amounts of supplemental assistance for COVID-related emergency measures.³

¹“Letter from President Donald J. Trump on Emergency Determination Under the Stafford Act,” March 13, 2020, “determine[ing] that an emergency exists for which the primary responsibility for response rests with the United States because the emergency involves a subject area for which, under the Constitution or laws of the United States, the United States exercises exclusive or preeminent responsibility and authority.” Available at <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/letter-president-donald-j-trump-emergency-determination-stafford-act/>.

²FEMA.gov, “Coronavirus (COVID–19) Response.” Available at <https://www.fema.gov/disasters/coronavirus>.

³P.L. 116–136, Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (Division B, Title VI), March 27, 2020. See also P.L. 116–260, FY 2021 DHS Appropriations Act and Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (Division F, Title III and Division M,

Continued

Concurrent with its activities related to the pandemic, FEMA was repeatedly tapped to assist state, local, tribal, and territorial governments as the nation was buffeted by record hurricane and wildfire seasons during the latter half of 2020,⁴ continuing recent trends of increasing severe weather and hazard activity.⁵

Decades of regular federal data collection and scientific research and analysis, as well as private sector research indicates that these types of events are increasing.⁶ State and tribal requests for FEMA federal emergency assistance and/or disaster relief are accordingly on the rise as state, tribal, territorial, and local governments' capacity to respond to and recover from these events is quickly exceeded given the scale and associated losses.⁷

FEMA's response to the pandemic since President Trump's invocation of Stafford Act Sec. 501(b) has been noteworthy, including nearly \$75.5 billion in assistance to state, local, tribal, and territorial partners;⁸ a 210-days-long activation of the National Response Coordination Center at FEMA headquarters; and an unprecedented logistics mission including 249 Project Airbridge flights to quickly import personal protective equipment in the opening months of the pandemic.⁹ It has proven the capacity and tenacity of FEMA's personnel and the flexibility of the Stafford Act, but it has also exposed the limitations of the agency's capabilities to quickly provide reimbursement for eligible activities, highlighted discrepancies in administering assistance across regions, and shown challenges for vulnerable populations across the country.¹⁰

FEMA LEADERSHIP DURING A TIME OF TRANSITION

During Administrator Gaynor's tenure at FEMA, the Trump Administration did not nominate individuals to serve as the agency's other top two leadership posts—Deputy Administrator and Deputy Administrator for Resilience. The Associate Administrator for Response and Recovery was, and continues to be, filled by an official in an acting capacity. Administrator Gaynor was tapped to become acting Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security on January 11, 2021, in addition to his FEMA role.¹¹

President-elect Biden nominated Deanne Criswell to be FEMA Administrator on January 15, 2021.¹² During the transition of administrations, FEMA Region 9 Administrator Robert Fenton assumed the role of Acting Administrator on January 20, 2021, and Region 3 Administrator Mary Ann Tierney became the senior official performing the responsibilities of Deputy Administrator. Both Fenton and Tierney are career members of the Senior Executive Service with significant experience in the

Title II), December 2020. See also P.L. 117–2, American Rescue Plan Act (Title IV, Secs. 4005, 4006, 4007, 4013, and 4014).

⁴Scientific American. "A Running List of Record-Breaking Natural Disasters in 2020." Last updated December 22, 2020. Available at: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-running-list-of-record-breaking-natural-disasters-in-2020/>.

⁵See *FEMA's Priorities for 2020 and Beyond: Coordinating Mission and Vision*; hearing before the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management, 116th Congress, March 11, 2020. See also *Disaster Preparedness: DRRRA Implementation and FEMA Readiness*; hearing before the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management, 116th Congress, May 22, 2019. See also *Building a 21st Century Infrastructure for America: Mitigating Damage and Recovering Quickly from Disasters*; hearing before the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management, 115th Congress, April 27, 2017.

⁶National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). "Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters: Events". Available at: <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/billions/events>.

⁷Congressional Research Service. *Stafford Act Declarations 1953–2016: Trends, Analyses, and Implications for Congress (R42702)*. August 28, 2017. See also FEMA, *Declared Disasters*. Available at <https://www.fema.gov/disasters/disaster-declarations>. See also FEMA. "Pandemic Response to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID–19): Initial Assessment Report." January 2021. Available at: https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_covid-19-initial-assessment-report_2021.pdf.

⁸FEMA. "DRF Funds Status report." Provided to committee staff by FEMA Congressional Affairs Division, June 10, 2021.

⁹"Presentation of the Fiscal Year 2022 President's Budget for the Federal Emergency Management Agency," briefing to committee staff, June 16, 2021.

¹⁰"Public Assistance Project Processing," briefing to committee staff, March 26, 2021; see also *Experiences of Vulnerable Populations During Disaster*; hearing before the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management, 116th Congress, July 28, 2020.

¹¹DHS.gov. "People—Peter T. Gaynor." Available at <https://www.dhs.gov/person/peter-t-gaynor>.

¹²Boston Globe. "Biden picks David Kessler, Deanne Criswell, David Cohen for top roles." January 15, 2021. Available at: <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/01/15/nation/biden-picks-deanne-criswell-david-cohen-top-roles-fema-cia/>.

field of emergency management.¹³ However, tapping Tierney ignores the existing orders of succession in place to fill the vacancy in the Deputy Administrator role, continuing a practice with which the committee previously expressed concern.¹⁴

Administrator Criswell most recently served as the Commissioner of the Department of Emergency Management for the City of New York (NYCDEM), starting in 2019. Prior service in the first responder community includes 21 years in the Colorado Air National Guard as a firefighter (1992–2013), Emergency Manager for the city of Aurora, CO (2005–2011), and a stint at FEMA as a Federal Coordinating Officer and then leading one of the agency’s elite National Incident Management Assistance Teams (IMAT) (2011–2017). Additionally, she was an emergency management consultant between her service at FEMA and NYCDEM.¹⁵

Administrator Criswell’s nomination was formally transmitted to the Senate on February 22, 2021; the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs (HSGAC) held her confirmation hearing March 25, 2021; her nomination was fast-tracked out of committee on April 14, 2021; and she was confirmed by the Senate via unanimous consent on April 22, 2021.

The Biden administration has not yet announced additional nominees for political leadership positions at FEMA. On June 11, 2021, FEMA announced that Regional Administrator Tierney will serve as the agency’s senior official performing the responsibilities of the Deputy Administrator through July 6, 2021, and that Nancy Dragani—currently the Acting Regional Administrator for Region 8—will assume the Deputy Administrator role on July 8, 2021.¹⁶

ADMINISTRATOR’S PRIORITIES

During her confirmation hearing, Criswell stressed to HSGAC the importance of FEMA’s employees and the need to bolster community resilience through mitigation. Criswell also highlighted the potential impact to communities across the nation posed by climate change.¹⁷

On her first full day following her swearing in, Administrator Criswell shared a message with FEMA’s employees via an all-hands e-mail. She thanked them for their tireless efforts to respond to the pandemic and noted the challenges over which the agency prevailed, and revisited her commitment to bolstering resilience from the individual-level up to the nation as a whole. Administrator Criswell also stressed that considerations of equity, diversity, and inclusion are paramount to the agency’s future efforts.¹⁸

Weeks later, during remarks to FEMA’s National Advisory Committee (NAC) in early May, Administrator Criswell re-affirmed that her areas of focus would include FEMA’s workforce; emergency management as a discipline—including managing expectations of the public and improving the community of emergency managers; resilience and mitigation; and equity—for disaster survivors, FEMA’s workforce, and across the profession of emergency management.

PRESIDENT’S FISCAL YEAR 2022 (FY22) BUDGET REQUEST

President Biden’s proposed budget for FY22 calls for a modest increase for the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF) over the base amount enacted for FY21 to account for ongoing pandemic-related operations and assistance. It also proposes an appropriation of \$500 million for Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM), which the president’s budget request refers to as “Disaster Relief Climate.” This \$500 million would be moved immediately into the PDM set-aside of the DRF established as part of Sec. 1234 of the Disaster Recovery Reform Act (Div. D of P.L. 115–254) to fund the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program.¹⁹

¹³FEMA.gov, “Robert J. Fenton” and “MaryAnn E. Tierney.” Available at <https://www.fema.gov/profile/robert-j-fenton-jr> and <https://www.fema.gov/profile/maryann-e-tierney>.

¹⁴“DHS Orders of Succession and Orders for Delegations of Authorities”, updated January 31, 2020. Provided to committee by U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security Office of Legislative Affairs February 4, 2020.

¹⁵LinkedIn. Profile of Deanne Criswell. Available at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/deanne-criswell-862bb2a>.

¹⁶FEMA all-hands e-mail “FEMA Senior Leadership Announcement,” June, 11, 2021. Provided to committee staff by FEMA Congressional Affairs Division.

¹⁷See *Nomination of Deanne B. Criswell to be Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Department of Homeland Security*. Hearing before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. 117th Congress, March 25, 2021.

¹⁸Provided by FEMA Congressional Affairs Division to committee staff.

¹⁹DHS.gov, “Department of Homeland Security Federal Emergency Management Agency Budget Overview—Fiscal Year 2022 Congressional Justification.” Available at https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/federal_emergency_management_agency_0.pdf

The FY22 president's budget request also proposes the following changes over FY21 enacted appropriations:

- An increase of \$3.2 million to enhance Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Fire Outreach and Training activities of the U.S. Fire Administration and its National Fire Academy;
- An increase of \$2 million—to \$12 million for FY22—for the High Hazard Potential Dam grant program;
- An additional \$12.5 million—to \$275.5 million for FY22—for flood hazard mapping and risk analysis (RISKMAP);
- An additional \$10 million each—to \$370 million each for FY22—for Assistance to Firefighter Grants (AFG) and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grants; and
- A reduction of \$15.3 million—to \$594.7 million for FY22—from the State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSGP) and \$15.3 million—to \$689.7 million for FY22—from the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI).²⁰

The President's budget request seeks level funding for Emergency Management Performance Grants (\$355 million), Post Security Grants (\$100 million), Public Transportation Security Assistance (\$100 million), Emergency Food and Shelter (\$130 million), and Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (\$20 million). Additionally, the President's Budget request includes a proposal for resources to implement the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard (FFRMS), which is intended to ensure that all federal infrastructure investments are constructed with resilience to current and predictable future flood risk, and was re-instituted on May 20, 2021.²¹

²⁰ DHS.gov, "Department of Homeland Security Federal Emergency Management Agency Budget Overview—Fiscal Year 2022 Congressional Justification."

²¹ "Executive Order on Climate-Related Financial Risk" Sec. 5(e), May 20, 2021. Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/05/20/executive-order-on-climate-related-financial-risk/>.

Overview of Disaster Relief and Mitigation Request in FY22 President's Budget²²

(in millions)

Program	FY 2021 Enacted	FY 2022 Authorized	FY 2022 President's Budget	Diff. of FY 2022 Pres. Budget and FY 2021 Enacted	
				\$	%
Disaster Relief Fund (DRF)	\$17,142.0 \$2,000.0 ²³ \$50,000.0 ²⁴ \$69,142.0	Such sums as necessary	\$18,799.0	+\$1.657 over initial FY21 enacted	+9.66%
Pre-Disaster Mitigation	\$0 ²⁵	Authorized in Stafford Act Sec. 203(j) ²⁶	\$500.0 ²⁷	+\$500.0	N/A
Emergency Management Performance Grants	\$355.0	No Authorization	\$355.0	\$0	0%
Total	\$18,218.2		\$5,933.1	-\$12,285.6	-67.4%

ONGOING CHALLENGES

The committee, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), and various external stakeholder groups have identified several facets of FEMA's work ripe for improvement. The committee has already taken up legislation to address some of these issues and is working toward additional legislation. These areas include:

- Reducing the complexity of FEMA's programs to help individuals and disaster-impacted communities recover and cut red tape.
 - FEMA's Public Assistance (PA) program, which funds infrastructure repair/replacement and essential governmental services, has an arduous application process and the agency is now dealing with more PA applicants than ever in its history resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and related Stafford Act declarations;²⁸
 - Overhauling the disaster survivor experience to ensure all those impacted by disaster who are under- or un-insured have access to the Individual Assistance (IA) they need and deserve and are not set back further in the wake of disaster;
 - Working with federal partners like the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to eliminate post-disaster bureaucracy and align rebuilding standards where applicable;
- Increasing federal investment in resilience and mitigation to reduce future response and recovery costs.
 - Ensuring the full calculation of aggregate disaster costs are placed in the Pre-Disaster Mitigation set-aside of the Disaster Relief Fund to fund BRIC (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities) projects;

²²“Executive Order on Climate-Related Financial Risk” Sec. 5(e), May 20, 2021.

²³P.L. 116-260, FY 2021 DHS Appropriations Act and Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, December 2020.

²⁴P.L. 117-2, American Rescue Plan Act, March 2021.

²⁵No money was appropriated by Congress to Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) for FY21, but the Agency utilized some of the six percent set-aside established in Sec. 1234 of the Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018 (DRRA, Division D of P.L. 115-254) to fund PDM grants for the FY20 grants cycle (Notice of Funding Opportunity released August 2020, awards pending) and will do so again for the FY21 cycle, for which a \$1B NOFO is expected in the summer 2021.

²⁶To more permanently address the need for authorization and dedicated funding for Pre-Disaster Mitigation, the Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018 (DRRA, Division D of P.L. 115-254) amended the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to establish a National Public Infrastructure Predisaster Mitigation Assistance program, funded by a six percent set-aside from the Disaster Relief Fund, based on the estimated aggregate amount of the grants made pursuant to Stafford sections 403, 406, 407, 408, 410, 416, and 428 for major disasters.

²⁷The President's budget refers to this as “Disaster Relief Climate”, noting that this \$500 M will supplement the 6 percent set-aside allowed pursuant to DRRA, and that this is intended to make up for amounts not set-aside in October 2020.

²⁸“Public Assistance Project Processing,” briefing to committee staff, March 26, 2021.

- Providing states/tribes/territories the assistance needed to spend down post-disaster Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) balances;
- Encouraging communities to adopt building codes and standards to reduce the impacts of disaster using the full suite of assistance programs beyond HMGP and BRIC to construct a built environment that is insurable;
- Ensuring agency policies are consistently applied from one FEMA region to another.

CONCLUSION

FEMA has been tested in recent years given COVID-19 and increasing disasters. Disasters are becoming more costly and increasing in frequency.²⁹ The new FEMA administrator is tasked with leading the federal government's crisis management agency during a time of overlapping management and mission challenges. It is imperative that the Biden administration has permanent leadership in place to tackle all of these issues and appropriately invest in pre-disaster mitigation and resilience to drive down the severity of future hazard events and ensure it has contributed to increasing national resilience from the individual citizen up to local, state, tribal, and territorial levels of government. This hearing provides the committee an opportunity to hear directly from Administrator Criswell how the administration will try to meet these challenges.

WITNESS LIST

- The Honorable Deanne Criswell, Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), U.S. Department of Homeland Security

²⁹National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), "Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters: Events." Available at: <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/billions/events>.

**FEMA'S PRIORITIES FOR FY22 AND BEYOND:
COORDINATING MISSION, VISION, AND
BUDGET**

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 23, 2021

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PUBLIC
BUILDINGS, AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT,
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 2:39 p.m., in room 2167 Rayburn House Office Building and via Zoom, Hon. Dina Titus (Chair of the subcommittee) presiding.

Members present in person: Ms. Titus, Ms. Norton, Mr. Garamendi, Mr. Webster, Miss González-Colón, Ms. Van Duyne, Mr. Graves of Louisiana, and Mr. Rouzer.

Members present remotely: Mr. DeFazio, Ms. Davids, Mrs. Napolitano, and Mr. Gimenez.

Ms. TITUS. The subcommittee will come to order.

I ask unanimous consent that the chair be authorized to declare a recess at any time during today's hearing.

Without objection, so ordered.

I also ask unanimous consent that Members not on the subcommittee be permitted to sit with the subcommittee at today's hearing and ask questions.

Without objection, so ordered.

As a reminder, I would ask you to please keep your microphones muted unless you are speaking. Should I hear any inadvertent noise, I will request that the Member please mute their microphone.

To insert a document into the record, please have your staff email it to DocumentsT&I@mail.house.gov.

Today, in this hearing, we are going to examine the priorities for the coming fiscal year for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, that I will refer to as FEMA going forward, and hear from the Administrator, Deanne Criswell, the Agency's first female leader.

And thank you very much for being here, and congratulations.

I look forward to hearing how Administrator Criswell and her team plan to convert the priorities of President Biden's fiscal year 2022 budget into measurable improvements in FEMA's administration of emergency assistance, disaster relief, mitigation, and resilience.

In March of last year, we held a similar hearing with former Administrator Gaynor. This was 2 days before President Trump invoked the Stafford Act to grant emergency declarations to each State and Territory to provide assistance to combat the COVID-19 pandemic as it quickly spread across the country.

At that time, I don't think any of us could have imagined FEMA would be tapped just a month later to plan and conduct an airlift, in coordination with the Department of Defense and the private sector, to bring staggering volumes of personal protective equipment from all over the world into this country.

Since that time, FEMA has helped multiple States utilize, tragically, refrigerated tractor-trailers to serve as makeshift mortuaries and has set up the Lost Wages Assistance program to provide additional jobless aid to those impacted by the pandemic's economic impact.

At the same time, they were dealing with record-setting hurricane and wildfire seasons and processing an unprecedented number of reimbursement requests from eligible grantees and sub-grantees. In fact, the statistics show that there were more unique requesters in the last year alone than there were in the Agency's first four decades of existence. You can imagine how overwhelming that must have been. And these are just the most immediate issues that Administrator Criswell will be tasked with having to address and get us through.

While the Agency has accomplished a lot since March 2020, including helping State, local, Tribal, and Territorial partners fully vaccinate more than 150 million Americans—and that was just in the last 6 months—many of the problems that deserve FEMA's attention were prepandemic. And so we must not forget about addressing those now as well.

Fortunately, the Administrator is no stranger to FEMA nor to being challenged shortly after stepping into a new leadership role. What an impressive resume she has. She served with distinction at FEMA as the Federal Coordinating Officer and as the lead for one of the Agency's elite National Incident Management Assistance Teams.

Just days after taking the helm of New York City Emergency Management, a blackout struck Manhattan, stranding hundreds of elevators and subways and wreaking havoc over a large part of the island. I cannot even imagine if those were my constituents calling me from a locked-in elevator.

So we look forward to hearing from you, based on that experience and your talent and your knowledge. I don't expect you to have solved all of the challenges in just your first 8 weeks leading FEMA, but we are hopeful that we can learn more about your plans to address the foundational challenges facing FEMA.

Some of those are adjudicating the backlog of reimbursements due to States and local governments under the Public Assistance program; tackling the inequities of the Individual Assistance program; recruiting and retaining a qualified, compassionate, and competent disaster workforce to provide timely aid; and allocating resources to better invest in mitigation and resilience before danger strikes our communities so they will be able to get back up on their feet faster and with less expense following a disaster. We must

build back better and not make the same mistakes of the past, even if it seems like it would be quicker or cheaper in the short run.

I expect you will touch on many of these tasks during today's hearing, and we will learn how the President's budget request will contribute to resolving some of those challenges we see facing the Agency.

I will close by saying, we recognize the challenges you face, Administrator Criswell, and we are here because we want you to be successful in that job. We also want to hear from you so we can ensure that you have the resources and authorities that you need to get the job done and done right for survivors and their impacted communities.

So thank you very much.

And I will now recognize the ranking member for his opening statement.

[Ms. Titus' prepared statement follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Dina Titus, a Representative in Congress from the State of Nevada, and Chair, Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management

Today we will examine the priorities for the coming fiscal year for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and of Administrator Deanne Criswell, the agency's first female leader.

I look forward to hearing how Administrator Criswell and her team plan to convert the priorities in the President Biden's Fiscal Year 2022 budget request into measurable improvements in FEMA's administration of emergency assistance, disaster relief, mitigation, and resilience.

In March of last year, we held a similar hearing with former Administrator Gaynor two days before President Trump invoked the Stafford Act to grant emergency declarations to each state and territory to provide assistance to combat the COVID-19 pandemic as it quickly spread.

At the time, I don't think Mr. Gaynor could have imagined FEMA would be tapped a month later to plan and conduct an airlift in coordination with the Department of Defense and the private sector to bring staggering volumes of personal protective equipment from all over the world into this country. Since then, FEMA helped multiple states utilize refrigerated tractor trailers to serve as makeshift mortuaries, set up the Lost Wages Assistance program to provide additional jobless aid to those impacted by the pandemic's economic impact concurrent with record-setting hurricane and wildfire seasons last year, and processed an unprecedented number of reimbursement requests from eligible grantees and sub-grantees. In fact, there were more unique requestors in the last year alone than there were in the Agency's first four decades of existence.

And these are just the most immediate issues that Administrator Criswell will be tasked with addressing.

While the agency has accomplished much since March 2020—including helping state, local, tribal, and territorial partners fully vaccinate more than one hundred and fifty million Americans since January of this year—many of the problems that deserved FEMA's attention pre-pandemic remain.

Fortunately, Administrator Criswell is no stranger to FEMA, nor to being challenged shortly after stepping into a new leadership role.

She served with distinction at FEMA as a Federal Coordinating Officer and the lead for one of the Agency's elite National Incident Management Assistance Teams. Days after taking the helm of New York City Emergency Management, a blackout struck Manhattan, stranding hundreds in elevators and subways, and wreaking havoc over a good chunk of the island.

I do not expect our witness to have solved all of the agency's challenges half-way through her eighth full week leading FEMA.

But I am hopeful that we can learn more about her plans to address the foundational challenges facing FEMA: adjudicating the backlog of reimbursements due to states and local governments under the Public Assistance program; tackling

the inequities of the Individual Assistance program; recruiting and retaining a qualified, compassionate, and competent disaster workforce to provide timely aid; and allocating resources to better invest in mitigation and resilience before danger strikes so our communities are able to get back up on their feet faster and with less expense following a disaster.

We must build back better, not continue to make the same mistakes because it may be easier or cheaper in the short-term.

I expect we'll touch upon many of these tasks during today's hearing, and how President Biden's budget request will contribute to resolving them.

I'll close by saying we recognize the challenges you face, Administrator Criswell, and we are here because we want you to be successful in this job. We also want to ensure you have the resources and authorities you need to get the job done, and done right for survivors and their impacted communities.

Mr. WEBSTER. Thank you, Chair Titus. And thank you to the new FEMA Administrator Criswell for being here today.

FEMA has a critical mission in our Nation and especially in my home State, Florida. FEMA leads the Federal Government's response to disasters, natural and man-made. While hurricanes, floods, wildfires, tornadoes, things like that, those disasters are more common, FEMA also manages the response to man-made disasters. Additionally, as we have seen with COVID-19, FEMA has an important role in responding to pandemics.

This all-hazards approach is critical to ensuring that we are prepared and the chain of command at the Federal level is clear, effective, and efficient.

Following problems in the Federal Government's response to Hurricane Katrina, Congress fixed key issues. Prior to Katrina, DHS had dispersed FEMA authorities throughout the Department and put multiple people in charge. This created confusion with no clear chain of command.

The Post-Katrina Act put FEMA back together again, and while maintaining FEMA within DHS, ensured that it is FEMA's Administrator—the emergency management expert—leading the Federal response. This provides a clear chain of command up to the Administrator and then directly to the President.

Since the reforms of the Post-Katrina Act, we have passed reforms to streamline the recovery process and invest more in mitigation and resiliency. There has been some progress. However, at times, it seems like after Congress removes redtape, there is more redtape.

Time costs money. The longer it takes communities to rebuild, the higher the cost to both the communities and to the Federal taxpayer. For example, in the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act, we created section 428 of the Stafford Act, which intended to give States a choice for a streamlined, faster process or to use the old paperwork way.

Security 428 authority was intended to speed up the process by basing assistance on certified cost estimates. The idea was to reduce costs by shortening the rebuilding time, cutting administrative costs, and arriving at a more definitive dollar amount for a project faster. Yet by many accounts, the section 428 process is looking more and more like the old.

Similarly, on the Individual Assistance side, GAO detailed how confusing FEMA's process can be for individuals and families who want to navigate the process. Communities hit by disaster should not have to deal with bureaucratic redtape when they are trying

to rebuild their lives. Ultimately, making it more difficult to access assistance will not reduce the rise in disaster costs—it may actually increase it.

Proposals to tinker around the edges, like making it more difficult for disaster declarations or creating more redtape, do little to reduce the disaster costs and harm individuals and communities.

The reality is that only a quarter of the disasters make up about 90 percent of the cost. It is the big disasters that drive the cost. And we know the proven way to reduce future administrative costs or disaster costs is to invest in mitigation. Study after study has shown that \$1 of investment in mitigation can save \$4 to \$11 in disaster recovery costs. In Florida, we have seen these benefits firsthand frequently by building smarter and investing in proven mitigation strategies.

This is why, on a bipartisan basis, in the Disaster Recovery Reform Act, we authorized up to 6 percent of disaster costs out of the Disaster Relief Fund to be used in predisaster mitigation. Unfortunately, FEMA has only set aside a portion of that money that is available.

The solution is helping communities recover and reducing future costs. Simplify the recovery process for small disasters to reduce administrative cost and allow Federal and State resources to focus on the large, more complex disasters.

Second, in the larger disasters, leverage flexibilities in the law to close out projects faster.

Third, maximize investment in proven mitigation measures.

FEMA already has many tools and legal authorities to achieve these goals. To make meaningful progress in these areas, it has to come from the top down within FEMA.

I look forward to working with you closely on these and other issues. I believe we can all work together to finally make a difference in how to prepare for recovery from disasters. I look forward to hearing your testimony.

Thank you, Chair Titus. I yield back.

[Mr. Webster's prepared statement follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Daniel Webster, a Representative in Congress from the State of Florida, and Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management

Thank you, Chair Titus, and thank you to the new FEMA Administrator, Ms. Criswell, for being here today.

FEMA has a mission critical to our Nation and my home state of Florida. FEMA leads the federal government's response to disasters—natural and man-made. While hurricanes, floods, wildfires, and tornados are disasters that are more common, FEMA also manages the response to man-made disasters. Additionally, as we have seen with COVID-19, FEMA has an important role in responding to pandemics. This all-hazards approach is critical to ensuring we are prepared and the chain of command at the federal level is clear, effective, and efficient.

Following problems in the federal government's response to Hurricane Katrina, Congress fixed key issues. Prior to Hurricane Katrina, DHS had dispersed FEMA authorities throughout the Department and put multiple people in charge. This created confusion with no clear chain of command. The Post-Katrina Act put FEMA back together again and, while maintaining FEMA within DHS, ensured that it's the FEMA Administrator—the emergency management expert—leading the federal response. This provides a clear chain of command up to the Administrator and then directly to the President.

Since the reforms of the Post-Katrina Act, we have also passed reforms to streamline the recovery process and invest more in mitigation and resiliency. There has been some progress; however, at times it seems after Congress removes red tape, more red tape is created by FEMA. With the significant rise in disaster costs and more disasters happening more frequently, we simply cannot afford to continue doing things the same way and expect different results.

Time costs money—the longer it takes communities to rebuild, the higher the costs to both those communities and to the federal taxpayer. For example, in the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act, we created section 428 of the Stafford Act intended to give States a choice for a streamlined, faster process or to use the old, paperwork-intensive process for rebuilding infrastructure. 428 authority was intended to speed up the process by basing assistance on certified cost estimates. The idea was to reduce costs by shortening the rebuilding time, cutting administrative costs, and arriving at a more definitive dollar amount for a project faster. Yet, by many accounts the 428 process is looking more like the old, cumbersome process, removing any incentives to use it.

Similarly, on the individual assistance side, GAO detailed how confusing FEMA's process can be for individuals and families to navigate. Communities hit by disaster should not have to deal with bureaucratic red tape when they are trying to rebuild their lives. Ultimately, making it more difficult to access assistance will not reduce the rise in disaster costs—it may actually increase it.

Proposals to tinker around the edges, like making it more difficult for disaster declarations or creating more red tape, do little to reduce disaster costs and harm individuals and communities. The reality is only a quarter of the disasters make up over 90 percent of disaster costs. It's the big disasters that drive the costs.

And, we know the proven way we can reduce future disaster costs is investment in mitigation. Study after study has shown that \$1 of investment in mitigation can save \$4 to \$11 dollars in disaster recovery costs. In Florida, we have seen these benefits firsthand frequently by building smarter and investing in proven mitigation strategies. That is why on a bipartisan basis, in the Disaster Recovery Reform Act, we authorized up to 6 percent of disaster costs out of the Disaster Relief Fund to be used for pre-disaster mitigation. Unfortunately, FEMA has only set aside a portion of what is available for mitigation, and we see the same proposed for the FY2022 budget.

The solutions to helping communities recover and reducing future costs are clear. First, simplify the recovery process for small disasters to reduce administrative costs and allow federal and state resources to focus on the large, more complex disasters. Second, in the larger disasters, leverage flexibilities in the law to close out projects faster. Third, maximize investment in proven mitigation measures.

FEMA already has many tools and legal authorities to achieve these goals, but where you feel you don't have what you need, we need to know. And, to make meaningful progress in these areas, it must come from the top down within FEMA. I look forward to working with you closely on these and other issues. I believe we can all work together to finally really make a difference in how we prepare for and recover from disasters. I look forward to hearing your testimony.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you very much, Mr. Webster.

I now recognize Mr. DeFazio, who is the chairman of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, for his opening remarks.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Thank you, Madam Chair.

And thank you, Ms. Criswell, for testifying here today. As I reminded your predecessor, Administrator Gaynor, our committee has jurisdiction over all of FEMA's Stafford Act responsibilities, which obviously are vast and of extraordinary importance and growing importance with the disasters invoked by climate change.

You have got a big job ahead. You bring good credentials to the job. But I have got to say, there is a lot of work to do. Having heard from Members representing devastated areas in previous disasters and myself last year with the extraordinary fires here in Oregon, including in my district—it looks like I am frozen up here. Hopefully, this is coming through well. I am in my office and I don't know what is with the Wi-Fi.

One of the common threads across these recoveries was a disconnect somewhere in the Public Assistance pipeline where bureaucracy seems to stifle the efforts on the ground. Many of the FEMA folks I have met on the ground are doing an extraordinary job and trying to help those who have been impacted, but somewhere further up the food chain and the bureaucracy, things get messy or delayed.

I have experienced that personally here in Oregon and particularly, not in my district, but in the district south of mine with assistance programs that were very, very slowly implemented. So there is a lot of concern about the logjam in the Public Assistance pipeline.

You have got a lot of eligible project worksheets to work on. I mean, there are a whole lot of them. But the pace at which they are being adjudicated is daunting, maddening, and very much a hardship for the applicants.

But despite the backlog, I am glad we were able to ensure the Agency had resources necessary to provide assistance. We worked hard on CARES, the end-of-year 2021 omnibus, and this year's American Rescue Plan. The only two times I can recall Congress allocating FEMA more and as quickly was after 9/11 and the 2005 hurricane season with Katrina, Rita, and Wilma.

The share of FEMA's assistance overall for disasters is infinitesimal compared to Public Assistance, yet Individual Assistance is seemingly bureaucratic and even more exasperating.

You got a letter from me, Chair Titus, Ranking Member Graves, and Ranking Member Webster, regarding confusion even for basic determinations of eligibility for Individual Assistance and the drastic differences, which have now been noted, between survivors' Individual Assistance awards for very similar types of damage in the same disaster. So you know there is a problem. And it is pretty much a black box to us. And I hope we will get some more insight into that today and in the future.

We can't get details for things as simple as full lists of questions posed to survivors, or copies of form letters used by the Agency to communicate throughout the process. You know, sure, I want to prevent fraud, but there has got to be a way to balance between the widespread fraud after 2005 and where we are today. When survivors have lost virtually everything, they shouldn't have to go through such a tortuous process.

I appreciate that you have discussed within the Agency the importance of ensuring more equity for survivors and within FEMA and their workforce itself. I want to know more about how you are going to improve in those areas.

And then finally, one more priority of the committee is, as was mentioned by both who spoke before me, the predisaster mitigation. We are all very proud of what we did on a very bipartisan basis in the DRRRA, Disaster Recovery Reform Act, in 2018.

We were pleased to hear about the upcoming notice of funding opportunity for the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program, doubling it from \$500 million to \$1 billion. It is a great step. But last year, the interest in the BRIC funding outstripped available resources by \$3 billion.

So this is another area where the chairs and ranking members sent a letter to your predecessor. Based on the calculations of disaster relief during the first 6 months of the pandemic, FEMA should have placed \$3.2 billion into the predisaster mitigation set-aside. Instead, the Trump administration only set aside \$500 million. So that means there is yet another \$1.7 billion in authority you have to commit to predisaster mitigation from the COVID declarations alone, which could result in, at a minimum by calculations that are well-documented, a 4-to-1 return. We will look for any way we can to provide additional funding for these cost-effective investments so we can achieve our shared goal of building a more disaster-resilient Nation.

Later in questions, I will bring up concerns I have about coordination between SBA, HUD, and FEMA, in the hope that we can deal with that morass into which many people fall.

So thanks again for your testimony, your time, and the expertise you bring to this Agency. You have massive challenges ahead. Thank you.

[Mr. DeFazio's prepared statement follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Peter A. DeFazio, a Representative in Congress from the State of Oregon, and Chair, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Thank you Chair Titus and thank you Administrator Criswell for being here today.

As I reminded former Administrator Gaynor at last year's hearing, this Committee has jurisdiction over all of FEMA's Stafford Act authorities. What I didn't realize then was how much time we were all going to spend working on FEMA issues over the past year.

I suspected that a lot of our work was going to surround the oversight of the still-ongoing recoveries from the record wildfires of 2017 and 2018, as well as hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria, and Michael.

Hearing from members representing those disaster devastated areas, I was frustrated by the complexity of nearly every aspect of the recoveries, but when I traveled to see these areas, I was always heartened by the FEMA leaders in place who were clearly committed to working with state and local leaders through the tough recovery issues.

But, one of the common threads across these recoveries was a disconnect somewhere in the Public Assistance pipeline, where bureaucracy was able to rear its ugly head and stymie efforts on the ground.

Unfortunately, since last year's hearing with the previous administrator, much of my own state of Oregon is also now working through recovery from the catastrophic destruction of last September's wildfires, while concurrently planning for what will likely be another devastating wildfire season.

All while still fighting to defeat the COVID-19 pandemic.

And Oregon isn't alone. So many states, territories, and tribes are working through recoveries from non-pandemic, presidentially-declared emergencies and disasters from recent years.

The committee has some serious concerns with the logjam in the Public Assistance pipeline. That's why I'm thankful that President Biden clarified eligibility for pandemic-related efforts earlier this year. But the glut of eligible project worksheets and the pace with which the agency is adjudicating them is daunting and frankly maddening.

But, despite the backlog, I'm glad that we were able to ensure the agency had the resources necessary to provide assistance. We worked hard on the CARES Act, the end-of-year FY21 omnibus, and this year's American Rescue Plan.

The only two times that I recall Congress providing FEMA as much and as quickly to assist states and locals was in the wake of 9/11 and the 2005 hurricane season that produced Katrina, Rita, and Wilma.

Tucked into last year's omnibus and this year's Rescue Plan was dedicated funds for funeral assistance—assistance for individual Americans who lost their lives to the pandemic.

As a share of FEMA's overall assistance, help for disaster survivors is infinitesimal compared to Public Assistance. Yet Individual Assistance is seemingly bureaucratic and even more exasperating.

When you get a letter from me, Ranking Member Sam Graves, Chair Titus, and Ranking Member Webster about the confusion regarding even basic determinations of eligibility for Individual Assistance and the drastic differences between survivors' Individual Assistance awards for similar types of damages, you know you have a problem.

The apparent inconsistencies and inequities for disaster survivors seeking help are frustrating. And the process survivors endure to apply and get evaluated is frankly a black box.

We can't seem to get details as basic as the full lists of questions posed to survivors or even copies of the form letters used by the agency to communicate throughout the process.

I'm all for preventing fraud, but there must be a middle ground between the abuses we saw in the wake of the 2005 hurricanes and the bureaucratic Individual Assistance program that exists today.

Survivors who have lost literally everything should not have to go through a rigmarole to try to prove eligibility for often meager FEMA assistance. It's demoralizing.

Having been here for the post-Katrina investigations, I realize there will always be people trying to beat the systems in place to deter fraud. But, the federal government should be able to ensure more consistent outcomes for survivors, without making them jump through hoops.

I appreciate that you've discussed the importance of ensuring more equity for survivors and the FEMA workforce, and I look forward to learning more about how you're going to improve outcomes in this area.

One more priority of the committee that I hope we can work on with you is pre-disaster mitigation. We are all proud of the work we did to get the Disaster Recovery Reform Act enacted in 2018, and the more consistent resources it provides for pre-disaster mitigation.

We were pleased to hear about the upcoming Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program—doubling it from last year's \$500 million to \$1 billion. This is a great step, but interest in last year's BRIC funding outstripped available resources by nearly three billion dollars.

This is another area where the chairs and ranking members sent a letter to your predecessor last October. Based on the calculations of disaster relief during the first six months of the pandemic, FEMA should have placed \$3.2 billion dollars into the pre-disaster mitigation set aside. Instead, the Trump administration only set-aside \$500 million.

So, that means that there's yet another \$1.7 billion in authority you have to commit to pre-disaster mitigation from the COVID declarations alone, which could result in—at a minimum—a four-to-one return on investment.

We are looking at ways to provide additional funding for these very cost-effective investments so that we can achieve our shared goal of building a more disaster-resistant nation.

Thank you again for your time, testimony, and expertise. I'm hopeful that you'll be the change agent needed to drive reforms inside FEMA, improve outcomes, and cut red tape. I look forward to the committee being a partner to ensure you have the authorities, resources, and direction to achieve your goals and the agency's mission.

Thank you. I yield back.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The ranking member of the full committee is not here today, so we will move on to hear from our witness.

I would like to welcome you again.

Our witness is the Honorable Deanne Criswell, who is Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Thank you very much for being with us here today. We all look forward to hearing from you.

Without objection, our witness' full statement will be included in the record.

Since your witness testimony has been made a part of the record, the committee would request that you limit your oral testimony to 5 minutes.

So, Administrator Criswell, the floor is yours. Please proceed.

**TESTIMONY OF HON. DEANNE CRISWELL, ADMINISTRATOR,
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY, U.S. DE-
PARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

Ms. CRISWELL. All right. Thank you, Chair Titus. Just real fast for a sound check to make sure you can hear me.

Ms. TITUS. We can hear you. You look and sound good.

Ms. CRISWELL. OK, great.

Chair Titus, Ranking Member Webster, and members of the subcommittee, I am delighted to appear before you today to discuss the President's budget request for FEMA in fiscal year 2022, and to describe how the President's vision guides my priorities for the Agency.

FEMA's mission of supporting people before, during, and after disasters has never been more critical than we see right now. Our role during the COVID-19 pandemic response and numerous other active disasters attests to the vital importance and responsibility of this Agency to our Nation.

Given FEMA's unprecedented mission requirements, the President's budget increases the FEMA budget to \$28.4 billion. This is \$1.9 billion more than the fiscal year 2021 enactment. The President's budget, if enacted, will allow FEMA to meet the challenges we face ahead.

In my first months as the FEMA Administrator, I am focused on three key priorities: supporting the FEMA workforce and our readiness, integrating equity into everything we do, and addressing climate change through risk reduction. I will describe these priorities in turn.

First, we must support the FEMA workforce and our readiness. To protect the well-being of our workforce and the communities we serve in a COVID-19 environment, we continue to rely on virtual operations where appropriate. We are evaluating how to enhance our operational capacity, promote an agile and expeditionary culture, and support the safe return to the office.

Workforce readiness begins with the right staffing levels. The fiscal year 2022 budget supports increased hiring, and among other things, would result in a 14-percent increase in the number of our Stafford Act employees. Readiness also means ensuring the workforce has the training, tools, and resources they need to do their job. And I am committed to providing that to my workforce.

Longer term, we also need to professionalize the field of emergency management by better defining what it means to be an emergency manager and building career paths for the Nation's emergency management workforce.

Second, we must integrate equity into everything we do. The Nation deserves to have our programs and services delivered fairly and equitably. To meet this expectation, diversity, equity, and in-

clusion must be core components of how we conduct ourselves and execute our mission.

FEMA is currently soliciting feedback from the public and our partners to ensure we understand how our programs impact survivors of different demographics and, where needed, we are committed to making changes. This includes changes to our policies, procedures, and how we deploy and execute our mission.

Internally, this means building a diverse and inclusive workforce which resembles the communities that we serve. Externally, it means we must proactively identify and reach out to underserved communities and populations most in need of our help.

We are analyzing our operational programs through the lens of equity, and we are doing that for a reason. We know that disasters exacerbate existing inequalities, and we need to ensure FEMA assistance reaches everyone who needs it. We must also identify the root causes of differing recovery outcomes for survivors and work aggressively and collectively to ensure access for all disaster response and recovery assistance.

FEMA's commitment to equity is evident in our efforts to advance the accessibility of COVID-19 vaccines. At the President's direction, FEMA coordinated with Federal, State, local, Tribal, and Territorial partners to support the establishment and expansion of over 2,100 community vaccination centers. This included 39 federally led CVC pilot sites and the deployment of 18 mobile vaccination units to help reach traditionally underserved and remote communities. Nearly 60 percent of all of the doses administered at the federally led pilot CVCs went to communities of color.

As we continue to execute our response to COVID-19 and other disasters, FEMA will also continue to prioritize equity across all of our operations.

Finally, we must address climate change through risk reduction. As emergency managers, we must face the challenges that climate change poses to our mission head-on and make generational-level investments to reduce these impacts.

As a former firefighter in Colorado, I understand the benefits of mitigation. Developing resilient communities ahead of an incident reduces both the loss of life and economic disruption. Every dollar invested in mitigation saves the American taxpayers \$6 in future spending.

To provide local partners with financial support for mitigation projects, FEMA is expanding resources and technical assistance for the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program, which establishes a reliable stream of funding for larger mitigation projects through a nationwide grant program. Recently, the President visited FEMA and announced that he was doubling the funding available for the BRIC program to \$1 billion for the fiscal year 2021 application period.

Mitigating the increasing flood risk is particularly important, as flooding is the most common and costly natural disaster in the United States. Among other initiatives, the President's fiscal year 2022 budget requests more than \$428 million for the Flood Hazard Mapping and Risk Analysis Program to allow for more climate change data to be incorporated into flood risk analysis.

FEMA is also working to ensure that communities are protected financially from flooding. FEMA is updating the National Flood Insurance Program pricing methodology to fix longstanding inequities by more closely aligning insurance premiums to the specific flood risk of each home. The fiscal year 2022 budget also includes a means-tested affordability proposal to ensure that everyone who needs flood insurance can afford it.

In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic is an important turning point for our country and challenges us to rethink our systems, decisions, and investments. This past year has not been easy, and I would like to recognize the professionalism and perseverance demonstrated by the FEMA workforce.

I look forward to working with the members of this subcommittee as we build a more ready and resilient Nation. I am happy to answer any questions.

[Ms. Criswell's prepared statement follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Deanne Criswell, Administrator, Federal
Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Department of Homeland Security**

Chair Titus, Ranking Member Webster, and Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Deanne Criswell, and I am the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). I am delighted to appear before you to discuss the President's Budget request for FEMA in Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, and to describe how the President's vision guides my priorities for FEMA as the Agency's new Administrator.

FEMA's mission of supporting people before, during, and after disasters has never been more critical. Our role during the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the numerous other disasters we are actively supporting, attests to the vital importance and responsibility of this Agency to our Nation. Given FEMA's unprecedented mission requirements, the President's Budget increases the overall FEMA budget to \$28.4 billion, which is \$1.9 billion more than the FY 2021 enactment. I believe that the President's Budget, if enacted, will put FEMA on sound footing to meet the challenges ahead.

Climate change is making natural disasters more frequent, more intense, and more destructive, and we must be prepared for another challenging series of disaster events this summer and fall. Last year, FEMA faced record-setting hurricane and wildfire seasons. Response and recovery operations from many of these past disasters continue even as FEMA pivots to prepare for what lies ahead. The FY 2022 President's Budget would increase the major disaster allocation in the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF) from \$17.1 billion to \$18.8 billion to address ongoing Stafford Act disasters. This includes \$9.3 billion for COVID-19; \$4.1 billion for Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria; \$2.2 billion for non-catastrophic disasters; \$1.2 billion for catastrophic disasters; and \$2.0 billion in reserve in anticipation of additional COVID-19 costs.

In my first months as the FEMA Administrator, I am focused on three key priorities, which are guided by the President's vision: (1) supporting the FEMA workforce and our readiness; (2) integrating equity into everything we do, and (3) addressing climate change through risk reduction. In today's testimony, I will describe these priorities in turn.

Supporting the FEMA workforce and our readiness. FEMA's workforce of more than 21,700 emergency managers does exceptional work every day to deliver our mission and as FEMA's Administrator, their readiness and well-being is my first priority.

Prioritizing the health and safety of FEMA's workforce enables us to best ensure that our personnel are ready to deploy or re-deploy to any disaster at a moment's notice. FEMA will continue to take all necessary measures to prioritize workforce health and safety within the COVID-19 environment. FEMA's workforce became eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine through the Department of Homeland Security's Operation Vaccinate our Workforce, which was launched in late January. Where appropriate, we continue to rely on virtual operations and inspections, as well as no-contact service methods, to protect both our workforce and the communities they

serve. As we prepare for a post-COVID-19 environment, we are evaluating how to enhance operational capacity, and promote an agile and expeditionary culture, while we support remote work where appropriate and return to the workplace safely.

Workforce readiness means that our people are ready to respond. This starts with having the right staffing levels. The FY 2022 Budget supports increased hiring, and among other things would result in a 14 percent increase in the number of FEMA's Stafford Act employees.

Readiness also means the workforce has the training, tools, and resources they need to do their job, and I am committed to providing them. For instance, FEMA's Incident Management (IM) workforce is currently comprised of nearly 11,000 personnel. The FY 2022 Budget includes \$32.3 million to not only recruit additional staff for the Incident Management Workforce, but to also train and equip them.

As we enter the 2021 hurricane and wildfire seasons and continue to prepare for no-notice events, our workforce has never been more experienced or tested. However, I recognize that many of our staff have been activated in support of COVID-19 response operations and numerous other disaster declarations for over a year, and we will ensure that our deployed workforce gets the rest and training to be ready for what comes next.

Longer term, we also need to continue to professionalize the field of emergency management by better defining what it means to be an emergency manager and building career paths for the Nation's emergency management workforce.

Integrating equity into everything we do. The Nation deserves to have our programs and services delivered fairly and equitably. To meet this expectation, diversity, equity, and inclusion are not optional and must be core components of how we conduct ourselves and execute our mission. They are not empty buzzwords. FEMA is actively working to meet this expectation and reduce unnecessary barriers to program participation for disaster survivors, grant recipients, and other key stakeholders. That includes low-income households and other traditionally vulnerable populations. We know we have work to do and we are committed to doing it. FEMA is currently soliciting feedback from the public and our partners to ensure we understand how our programs impact survivors of different demographics, and we are committed to making changes where needed. This includes changes to our policies, procedures, or how we deploy and execute our mission.

Internally, this means understanding that to help individuals we must create safe and welcoming environments and that we do this by building a diverse and inclusive workforce which resembles the communities we serve. Externally, it means we cannot be satisfied only with assisting those who seek us out—we must also proactively identify and reach out to underserved communities and populations most in need of our help. We are analyzing our operational programs through the lens of equity for a reason. We know that disasters exacerbate existing inequalities, and we need to ensure that FEMA assistance reaches everyone who needs it. We must also come together across all disaster recovery stakeholders to identify the root causes of differing recovery outcomes for survivors and work aggressively and collectively to ensure equity in disaster response and recovery.

FEMA's commitment to equity is further evident in our efforts to advance the accessibility of COVID-19 vaccines. At the President's direction, FEMA coordinated with federal and state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) partners to support the establishment and expansion of over 2,100 Community Vaccination Centers (CVCs) to achieve the Administration's goal of administering 200 million shots in 100 days. This included 39 federally led CVC pilot sites and the deployment of 18 mobile vaccination units to help reach traditionally underserved and more remote communities. As part of these efforts, FEMA established a Civil Rights Advisory Group (CRAG) in January with our federal partners to support the Administration's priority of making equity a cornerstone of the COVID-19 response. The CRAG supported the development of the methodology used to determine federally led CVC pilot site selections and has worked in all ten FEMA regions to collect and analyze demographic data, identify underserved communities, and collaborate with community-based organizations. Nearly 60 percent of all doses administered at federally led pilot CVCs went to communities of color, and interpretation services have been provided to non-English speakers in over 180 languages.

As we execute our response to COVID-19 and other disasters, FEMA will continue to prioritize equity across all operations, both internally and externally. In support of this priority, the FY 2022 President's Budget includes an additional 54 employees at Headquarters and in the Regions, who will focus on equity issues. Among other things, these staff will analyze the extent to which FEMA is delivering programs and services fairly and equitably, as well as make data-informed recommendations for how FEMA can improve the delivery of its programs and services nationwide.

Addressing climate change through risk reduction. As emergency managers, we must face the challenges that climate change poses to our mission head-on and make generational-level investments to reduce the impacts we are experiencing as a result. Disasters are more frequent and more costly. While we will always be ready to respond when disasters occur, we recognize that true success rests in mitigating the worst impacts of disasters before they occur. As a former firefighter in Colorado, I understand the impact mitigation has. Developing resilient communities ahead of an incident reduces both the loss of life and economic disruption, and, according to an independent study by the National Institute of Building Sciences in 2019, every dollar in federal hazard mitigation grants invested in mitigation is estimated to save the American taxpayer six dollars in future spending.

To provide local partners with financial support for mitigation projects, FEMA will expand the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program. I would like to thank Congress for providing the legislative tools to create BRIC, per Section 1234 of the Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018 (DRRA). By establishing a reliable stream of funding for larger mitigation projects through a nationwide grant program, the BRIC program provides a critical opportunity for governments to invest in a more resilient nation, reduce disaster suffering, and avoid future disaster costs. Recently, the President visited FEMA to announce that he was increasing the funding available for the BRIC program to \$1 billion for the FY 2021 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) application period. FEMA will set funding levels for the FY 2022 BRIC program consistent with the President's priorities.

Mitigating the increasing risk of flooding will be an important component of FEMA's efforts to increase our Nation's resilience to climate change. As millions of American families have unfortunately experienced first-hand, flooding is the most common and costly natural disaster in the United States. Furthermore, direct average annual flood losses have quadrupled from approximately \$4 billion per year in the 1980s to roughly \$17 billion per year between 2010 and 2018. Over the past decade, flooding and coastal storms have accounted for roughly 70 percent of all Presidential Disaster Declarations.

We must drive the kind of system-based mitigation this Nation needs to make our communities more resilient to flooding. The President's FY 2022 Budget requests more than \$428 million for the Flood Hazard Mapping and Risk Analysis Program (Risk MAP) to allow for climate change data to be incorporated into flood risk analysis. The FY 2022 Budget also requests \$5 million to help other federal agencies put flood resilience measures into effect. A further \$5 million is requested in FY 2022 for climate research and nature-based solutions, to provide funding for actionable climate research that can be used by SLTT partners to design and build innovative mitigation projects which address the impacts of climate change. By investing in mitigation, our federal and SLTT partners will be better prepared for future extreme weather events and be able to recover faster at the individual and community level.

FEMA is also working to ensure that communities are protected financially as well as physically from flooding. Flood insurance policies through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) can help households fill a financial void when a disaster occurs and better rebuild their lives in its aftermath. For the first time in nearly 50 years, FEMA will update the NFIP pricing methodology to communicate flood risk more clearly so households can make more informed decisions on risk, insurance, and mitigation actions to protect against the perils of flooding and climate change. These changes will also fix longstanding inequities in flood insurance pricing by more closely aligning insurance premiums to the specific flood risk of each home. The FY 2022 Budget also proposes a means-tested affordability proposal.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has represented an important turning point for our country, and challenges us to rethink our systems, decisions, and investments. This past year has not been easy, and I would like to recognize the professionalism, resilience, and perseverance demonstrated by the FEMA workforce and our partners. As we look to the challenges ahead, I look forward to working with the Members of this Subcommittee as we build a more ready and resilient nation. Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you very much.

I now recognize Chairman DeFazio for his first questions.

[Pause.]

Sorry, we can't hear you.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Sorry. And I am there. OK, sorry.

You mentioned your firefighting background, and that is going to be critical in the coming summer. We are having what might turn out to be the hottest week over the Greater West in history. I mean, we are not anywhere near August yet and we were already in record drought. So this is going to be extraordinary.

And I am just wondering if you think that our pre- and post-disaster funding has historically—just because, you know, the severe wildfires are a more recent occurrence—slanted toward wind and flood events, hurricanes and the like, and whether we need to rethink those priorities in predisaster.

Ms. CRISWELL. Yes. It is a really timely question as we talk about the hazard mitigation funding that we have available through BRIC, but we also have several other hazard mitigation programs.

I think an important point to note is we in recent years have enacted a hazard mitigation funding after an FMAG, a Fire Management Assistance Grant, has been given to do additional hazard mitigation that is specific to those communities that were impacted by the fire. This program allows us to rebuild and help those communities that were specifically impacted.

But I think, on a larger note, the grant program that we have available or the various grant programs that we have available, it is the State and local jurisdictions that submit for the projects that they want to conduct within their communities. And I think where FEMA can help play a part in that is really help educating communities that this funding is available to also support wildland mitigation efforts, which to date only a small percentage of the grants submitted are submitted for wildland fire mitigation.

And so I think as a Nation we have work to do to make sure everybody understands the magnitude and scope that this program can cover and that we help people understand the types of system-wide mitigation that can now be done through this increased level of funding.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Excellent. Yes, I think a new program of outreach is warranted. In many cases, we are dealing with relatively unpopulated counties, small jurisdictions, and there is not a lot of expertise there. So that would be very welcome.

How about the issue I raised at the beginning: simplifying the language used in correspondence and the notifications for status of applications, and then some kind of coordination?

Is it possible—I know bureaucracies are difficult—to have a universal application between HUD, SBA, and FEMA, and is that something you are envisioning working on?

Ms. CRISWELL. I think that the points you raise really demonstrate that recovery from these disasters is really complex. And there are several programs that are out there that do support the long-term recovery of communities and for individuals.

I understand the frustration. I recently came from the local level. And while it may be a major urban center, it was also difficult to navigate sometimes the Federal bureaucracy.

I think that right now we can do a better job of trying to make sure that our programs are more accessible and easily accessible for individuals so they know what to ask for and what they would

be eligible for. But from the long-term recovery standpoint, we have recovery coordinators that do work with communities to help bring all of the various programs together.

But I think as we talk about the fact that these disasters are becoming more complex and we are having to bring in more programs to rebuild really emphasizes the point that we need to also be taking a different approach, and as all of you have stated, investing in mitigation upfront so we reduce those impacts and so we don't have to rely on so many programs for recovery.

Mr. DEFAZIO. OK. Again, we may want to revisit my idea about universal application, and I would be happy to work with the other committees of jurisdiction.

But finally, we have been looking for a national rule of reasonable and prudent alternatives under the National Flood Insurance Program for ESA compliance, given some perverse court rulings on this. And I want to know when we can expect to have that rule published, because the alternative is, we are going to have litigation in myriad States by various groups regarding the NFIP program and noncompliance with ESA for whatever species exists in those States. I think we really have to move on to a national rule.

Do you have a timeline on that?

Ms. CRISWELL. I don't have the specifics on where we are at with that program, Representative, but certainly I will get with my team and we will get back to you with the status and what the timeline looks like.

Mr. DEFAZIO. OK. Thank you. That would be fabulous because this has been dragging on for far too long. I mean, the litigation was back under the Obama administration. Granted, there probably wasn't much progress under the last administration on this issue. But, anyway, that would be great.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you.

The Chair now recognizes the ranking member for 5 minutes.

Mr. WEBSTER. Thank you, Chair.

FEMA has played a critical, I might say from my own experience, a very effective leadership position and leadership role in response to COVID-19. Are you looking, is FEMA looking at sort of the lessons learned of success and failure—or whatever—during this time, and are you making recommendations for, hopefully not, but the pandemic of the future?

Ms. CRISWELL. Representative Webster, we have learned so much as a Nation from the response to COVID-19, and I learned a great deal during my time in New York City. And when I came here, I worked with my team to see where we are at in really discovering what we as an Agency learned and how we implemented our programs differently.

And we did find that there are ways that we can administer our programs more remotely, more efficiently, through the use of technology. And that is one of the things that we are now looking at, how we can institutionalize that into the way we deliver programs for the future.

I think that we have such a great opportunity in front of us right now to capitalize on how we learn to do things better and differently that I believe will really make a difference in reaching out

to more underserved communities and being able to bring assistance to the people where they are at instead of making them come to FEMA to get their help.

Mr. WEBSTER. Awesome. The State of Florida has two problems related to each other, both of them related to time. And I would suspect there are others that have the same problem. In one case, we need more time. In another case, we need less time.

And at least in my area, FEMA has set, at least in some instances, it has set an amount of time, 30-day deadline to get cost estimates in to the damage that has happened. So the storms happened, the winds came, or if it was a hurricane or something, then it leaves, and now we have got 30 days to come up with a cost estimate.

On the other hand, for our area, after that happens, 30 days is just when it is probably subsiding. It may be just 3 or 4 days before that the flooding from the rivers has peaked, because the flow of the water comes downstream and this rolling crest that is coming down floods the area again, and so we can't make the estimates needed. So that is sort of the—we need a little bit more time, because it is just the way it works, at least in some areas for some things.

Secondly, though, we need less time. Sometimes our State, especially the small cities and counties that don't have a surplus, they don't have sort of a slush fund or anything else to balance their needs, they get by from kind of like paycheck to paycheck. And so those counties and cities that do that need less time for FEMA to pony up the money that they need.

I was thinking about several of them who waited maybe after a disaster over a year, maybe 2 years before they were able to get their money. It is not that they didn't get it. It is just that in the time in between, they have nothing to fill in the gaps. Lots of major cities, larger cities, they can do it. They can get by and things work out and the time isn't as big a problem, but for us, I have a lot of small counties and cities. They do—they need time shortened so that they can get those things taken care of.

So I guess my question is, can you commit to help us out? Or if there are other tools you need in order to do that, can we provide them? Or is it do you have enough tools, you just need to do it? Those are my questions.

Ms. CRISWELL. Thank you. I appreciate the conversation you and I had the other day regarding this. Time, as you stated, is our most precious commodity. When it comes to response, we want to make sure that we are getting in there fast so we can save lives. When it comes to recovery, we want to make sure that we are getting people assistance, financial reimbursement soon so they can stay viable for their own staff.

But you bring up the great point, as I have seen firsthand how long it can take for flooding to recede and actually get in there to do the assessments that are required. So I think that your point also really goes to my priority of equity, which is, we want to be able to ensure that we are delivering our programs equitably across the Nation and to provide for the needs of the communities that are impacted, which will all have their own specific and unique needs.

So I am committed to having my team continue to dive into this subject and determine how we can better support communities, give them access to the programs that they need soon when they need it, and give them the time that they need to make sure that they can get all of the appropriate paperwork in place so they can get the reimbursement that they are eligible for.

Mr. WEBSTER. Thank you very much. I look forward to working with you.

I yield back.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you.

Now I yield to myself.

It is very refreshing to hear you speak so freely about the impacts of climate change as opposed to erasing the term from the website like we saw happen with some agencies under the last administration.

Now, Nevada and the West are drier and hotter in recent years than ever, exacerbating the wildfire threats. Just last week, my district in Las Vegas experienced 5 straight days over 113 degrees and a couple at 117. Meanwhile, we are burning up, other places are flooding. Riverside and coastal communities are dealing with the consequences of sea level rise, whether it is just regular tidal flooding on clear days or it's severe storm surges during the extreme weather, like the hurricanes that you are seeing in the Southeast.

We already know, and as Chairman DeFazio pointed out, the demand is great for State, local, Tribal, and Territorial governments to invest in infrastructure projects to mitigate some of these known and predictable threats that arise from environmental changes. And we are seeing that reflected in the oversubscribed Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program, or BRIC, as we call it.

Another place we are seeing it is in a program that this committee enacted last year with FEMA to seed State-managed revolving loan funds. This idea was introduced by our colleague, Representative Angie Craig, and it is based on very successful Water State Revolving Funds.

Those communities that have gotten tired of repeatedly applying and not being selected for some of the highly competitive grants can instead just choose to pursue projects on their own with a predictable path of paying it off. And I hope that FEMA will seek funds to seed those revolving funds in the next budget.

But something we could do today is put aside more resources into predisaster mitigation. And I realize what the budget calls for, the request for \$500 million for disaster relief funding and the 6-percent calculation for BRIC, but could you talk to us a little bit about how you see those two buckets coming together to help with this issue of great demand and not very many resources?

Ms. CRISWELL. Thank you for the question. We are, and I have seen personally the continuous increase in the number of natural disasters, the severity of these disasters, the frequency of these disasters, and I think, more importantly, how rapidly they start to escalate now, more rapidly than we have seen them in the past. And that goes from wildfires to hurricanes in the gulf. And this is a direct result of our changing climate.

The best protection we have as we work to reduce and change the direction that the climate is going, the best investment that we can do right now is through predisaster mitigation funding. And we have multiple different mitigation programs that can support this.

The BRIC program, which I thank everybody here for your involvement in making this a reality. I think the importance of the BRIC program and how it relates to some of our other programs is we now have a continuous source of funding at a much higher level than we have had in the past. So we can make generational-level investments in reducing risk.

In our previous programs, the max grant I believe was \$4 million Federal share, and now we can go up to \$50 million. This takes us away from the incremental way that we have been approaching hazard mitigation in the past and really shifts our focus to a systemwide approach.

But what we need to do is really help communities think in the systemwide approach more so we can start to put these visionary projects that will not just have an impact for us now but for our children and our grandchildren in the future. I think this type of generational-level investment is going to be critical as we start to think about what the risks are going to be 10 years from now or 20 years from now as a result of our changing climate.

Ms. TITUS. I know that there is bipartisan support for expanding these kind of investment opportunities, and I wonder if you see any problems with increasing that budget from \$1 billion?

Ms. CRISWELL. Chair Titus, I don't see any issues for increasing that budget. FEMA has the ability to set aside 6 percent as a result of the DRRA, and we are committed to continuing a baseline of funding at \$500 million to help support these mitigation projects as we continue to build out and mature the BRIC program.

Ms. TITUS. OK. Well, thank you. We would like to pursue that and see if we can't encourage some greater investment.

I will now recognize Ms. Van Duyne.

Ms. VAN DUYNÉ. Thank you very much, Chairwoman Titus and Ranking Member Webster, for holding this hearing.

FEMA plays an incredibly important role responding to natural disasters, but it also works side by side with numerous other agencies to fulfill its mission.

When I was regional administrator for HUD during Hurricane Harvey, Maria, and Irma, I saw firsthand the bureaucratic web of redtape and inefficiencies that prevented getting help to those who needed it most in a timely manner. And I spoke with many of you in this body who came to me fighting for your constituents and asking me why it was taking so long to get aid. And I felt and understood your frustration, but I had to explain the long list of policies, procedures, and redtape that our regulations demanded.

And these inefficiencies have serious costs. The faster FEMA is able to get help to communities of need, the faster they can recover. And it is critically important that these agencies all work together.

Now, I understand what has been said today about increasing funding, but I think it shouldn't be always about increasing the amount of funding but about spending the allocated dollars in the most efficient way possible. And many of the rules for disaster recovery often make no sense. For example, FEMA can spend \$500

to install a temporary water heater, but it can't spend more than \$300 to repair the one that is there. So FEMA is unable to build a permanent structure when often the temporary is more expensive.

Can you help me understand and just bring a little bit more common sense and tell me what kind of efficiencies and adjustments have you seen in your time at FEMA that could actually help in this matter?

Ms. CRISWELL. I think that it is a great point. As I mentioned a little bit earlier, there is so much of our funding that is designed for long-term recovery, and we have so many different sources that can bring assistance to individuals.

And I hear you. I hear that sometimes the way the regulations are written, it takes the common sense out of the factor of how do we actually be good stewards of the taxpayer dollar.

I understand some of the struggles that we have had in the past. And we have been able to do some creative things through the Stafford Act, like the STEP program during the response to Hurricane Sandy in New York and New Jersey, and I believe we have done some other things. FEMA has done some other things over the past 2 years as well.

But I have directed my team to take a look at how we are applying the intent of the Stafford Act, and do we need to make some regulatory changes so we can make sure that we are, one, being good stewards of the taxpayer dollar, but getting people on the road to recovery sooner than having to wait for all of these programs to come together.

Ms. VAN DUYNE. And I appreciate that. And by the way, I do want to give a shout-out to Tony Robinson. He is your RA out in region 6. I would recommend talking to him and others who I have worked with that actually can help you direct the funds more efficiently.

I have got another question. Since March, FEMA has been involved in setting up shelters at the border. Yesterday, I know that you met with President Biden. Was the ongoing crisis at the border and FEMA's ongoing mission discussed?

I know that Press Secretary Psaki was unable to answer if there was a deadline on FEMA and whether or not you are going to be able to pull away from the border as we enter into our hurricane season.

Ms. CRISWELL. Thank you for asking that question. FEMA's role is to coordinate across the Federal interagency. We are very good at that.

And FEMA was brought in to support HHS and CBP as they were executing their mission to support the border. FEMA at no time—I mean, the max number of people that we had at the border was less than 100 at any given time. So only a small amount of our staff were involved in providing some technical assistance to that.

But as HHS and CBP have continued to take over their roles in the program, we now have less than 14 people supporting this mission, and our staff has reset so they can get ready to support hurricane season.

Ms. VAN DUYNE. Great. Thank you very much.

I have got one quick other question. I know we had a great relationship at HUD and FEMA and USDA and others that are working on disaster recovery, but sometimes we have like hard silos that we see that were unable to be able to cooperate in a manner that would make the most sense.

So have you seen how to be able to build more of a unified front with some of the other agencies?

Ms. CRISWELL. I think as we talk about long-term recovery, that is what the intent of a National Disaster Recovery Framework was all about, about how do we build those relationships and bring all of the things that the Federal Government has to offer to the table, and to make sure that we are doing it in a collective way so we are complementing each other's programs instead of working in individual silos.

As we continue to look at how we are going to approach and refine the way we are doing business here at FEMA, given the new operational things that we have learned from COVID-19, I think we have another opportunity to also talk about how we are doing that for long-term recovery and can actually bring these programs together in a better way.

Ms. VAN DUYNE. Awesome. Thank you very much.

I yield back my time.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you.

The Chair now recognizes Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Administrator Criswell, I want to question you first on FEMA's role in the insurrection here at the U.S. Capitol. The reason I am interested is I noted that FEMA has an Office of National Capital Region Coordination. Let me read to you what its mission is: "To conduct preparedness, planning, and operational activities and provide leadership and coordination within the National Capital region to synchronize and integrate the whole community in executing homeland security and emergency management activities."

Administrator Criswell, what steps did FEMA take in general, and the Office of National Capital Region Coordination in particular, take to prepare for and respond to the attack of January 6?

Ms. CRISWELL. Thank you for that question. I observed the events of January 6 not from Washington, DC; I was in New York City at the time. And so I was away from the area as many Americans watched what happened that day.

But I want to point out that FEMA is not a law enforcement agency. But as you stated, we do have a team, the National Capital Region Coordination team, the National Capital Region Coordination. And they work every day with the district and the neighboring jurisdictions on preparedness activities. And particularly, one of their roles is to work collectively with those homeland security and emergency management agencies across the region in preparation for national special security events.

And so that team had done a number of preparedness efforts in advance of the inauguration. They had done a number of tabletop exercises, planning exercises, coordination meetings, to talk specifically about what would happen at the inauguration if there was an event of civil unrest. And so they had—

Ms. NORTON. Well, that is really my question. Now that we know what happened on January 6, in what ways is FEMA prepared to respond to any future such attacks against the Federal Government in the Nation's Capitol?

Ms. CRISWELL. Again, I would like to point out that FEMA is not a law enforcement agency. Our job is to work with our local jurisdictions in their preparedness efforts, make sure that they have the tools and the resources that they need in order to accomplish their mission.

Ms. NORTON. You have an office of preparedness, planning, and operational activities for the National Capital region. That is the reason I am asking this question.

Ms. CRISWELL. Yes, ma'am. And it is that group that works with the local agencies to help in their capability and their preparedness efforts. Our role is to work with them, to do exercises with them, to assist in writing their plans as needed so that they can execute it. But FEMA, again, is not a law enforcement agency and would not respond to such a situation.

Ms. NORTON. I am well aware of that. I am just trying to make sure you are playing your role here in the National Capital region. The Department of Defense failed to deploy the DC National Guard here for hours. And so FEMA is not uninvolved in all of this.

Let me ask you a question about communities of color and low-income and disabled people here around the country in the wake of national disasters, because these are the people who face more difficulties when applying for FEMA disaster assistance.

Now, I know that the President has an Executive order—that is President Biden—that commits the Federal Government to implementing a comprehensive approach—I was very pleased at that—to advancing equity for historically underserved and marginalized communities.

Administrator Criswell, how do you plan to fulfill this administration's pledge of eradicating inequity in emergency planning?

Ms. CRISWELL. Yes. Through my previous experience, I have seen firsthand the disproportionate impact that our underserved communities face during a disaster. What I have seen is those communities that have a hard time during day-to-day life have an even harder time then once a disaster happens.

And as I stated in my opening remarks, equity—and equity in how we deliver our programs—is one of my top priorities as I come into this position. I have directed my team to really take a deep look at the barriers that people are facing in receiving assistance.

But I think even more importantly is access to assistance. What we have seen and what we have been able to do during our support for the COVID-19 response is learning how important it is to get assistance to the people instead of having them and forcing them to come to us.

And we were able to use data in a way that we have never been able to or didn't use before. And I think that is really going to be instrumental in how we change the delivery of our programs going forward, to make sure that we can target and reach out to those communities we know are going to need assistance and maybe just don't have the means to access it as much as some other commu-

nities. And so, again, I have directed my team to take a look at what barriers that we are seeing.

And we have also, and it is important to point out here, we have asked for input from the public. We have put out a request for information on our website asking the community what struggles are you facing in receiving assistance from FEMA.

And we are going to take that information as we continue this analysis of our delivery of programs and make improvements along the way. And that RFI, that request for information is available for the communities to respond to until July 21.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you.

Mr. Gimenez.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Thank you, Madam Chair and the ranking member.

Administrator Criswell, I represent the congressional district with probably the most National Flood Insurance Program policies in the country. In Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties, which I represent, there are almost 400,000 NFIP policies. Obviously, the Risk Rating 2.0 is going to have a huge impact on my constituents and I intend to watch the situation very closely.

With that in mind, I am concerned with the roll-out of the plan. It all seems to be happening pretty quickly and I don't think that any of my constituents who are policyholders understand what may happen to their rates. What does FEMA intend to do beyond simply working through the insurance industry to educate and inform policyholders about their rates?

And, more importantly, what else can FEMA do to help people learn about the mitigation options available to them to help them reduce their rates if they are going to go up significantly under the new rate structure, and it looks like it will? And some of my constituents that never had to buy flood insurance are now going to be faced with buying flood insurance for the first time at a significant rate.

So what can you do to help?

Ms. CRISWELL. Yes. Thank you for that question. Risk Rating 2.0 has been in the works for several years, and FEMA has worked with industry experts to really look at how we were providing rates and establishing rates for individuals. And what we found is that the risk calculations themselves were not specific and unique to the individual's risk.

And so what Risk Rating 2.0 does is, it really creates an equitable distribution of the risk that is out there and so homeowners that don't have as much risk, their rates are actually going to go down, but they have been subsidizing the risk for some of the individual homeowners that have a higher risk and so the program itself just—I believe it is about two-thirds of the program, their rates are either going to go down or the increase in the rate is going to be no more than what they experience on a year to year basis right now.

I hear you on the ability to make sure that we are doing enough education and outreach to make sure people understand what their rates are going to be. The roll-out of the program for phase 1 is that any new policies that are put in place by October 1, they are

going to be subject to the new risk rating methodology, but also beginning October 1, any individuals that their rates are going to go down, their rates will go down starting October 1.

But for those policyholders that need to renew their policies, if their rates are going to go up, that is not going to happen until April 1 of next year.

And I will commit to you that I will make sure that my team is doing the appropriate level of outreach and education so homeowners understand what their impacts are going to be and how they can get better prepared for that.

Mr. GIMENEZ. The statement that you said about the rates going up and down. That is not on a nationwide level, right? It is not really—it is not really in Monroe County, which is really the county that I am most concerned about?

Ms. CRISWELL. Yes.

Mr. GIMENEZ. OK. All right. Thank you.

The second question I have—and I appreciate the administration's recent focus on the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Predisaster Mitigation Grant program and I really applaud Congress for creating it.

Monroe County, again, that is the Keys, which makes up the Florida Keys, requested funding from the BRIC program for the Twin Lake project in my district, but Twin Lakes and another community in the Keys, Stillwright Point, are ground zero for sea level rise and sea level rise concerns, and they really need FEMA's urgent attention through the BRIC program.

The situation is so dire that the New York Times back in November of 2019 featured both communities and that they had lived through 82 straight days of flooding in their streets due to sea level rise.

Will you please join me in my districts to visit these communities that really point to the spherical sea level rise and work with the county, the constituents, and me to help devise a plan to improve the situation there through their BRIC or other programs?

Ms. CRISWELL. Congressman, yes. I mean, I think that is a true example of how this community [inaudible] now available through the BRIC program can make real differences across the community, and so I would be happy to meet with you and your constituents to get a better understanding of what their challenges are.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Well, thank you. By the way, that is in the Keys, so it is really not a bad trip. OK?

Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

And I yield my time back.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you. Maybe we should all go down there on a field trip for this committee.

Mrs. Napolitano.

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Administrator Criswell, it is great to see you here. I have three points that I would like to make. First is the strategic goal that you name to reduce complexity. Many constituents in my area were struggling to identify and access funeral assistance and would like to know what efforts you make to improve outreach and accessibility?

Second question, the \$1 billion President Biden has included for FEMA's budget, Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program doubling the funding available to help citizens and States prepare for extreme weather disasters. In instances like Puerto Rico, can we make sure that the infrastructure policy is changed to allow rebuilding to modern infrastructure, not to the same old, to withstand frequent hurricanes or emergencies?

And then to the same question, how will FEMA prioritize communities' requests for predisaster mitigation funding and will the communities be able to take precedence over them?

The third item, a New York Times article on June 7, found FEMA looking at ratio disparities. Have you identified these, and how are you sharing your findings and changes with local government?

Ms. CRISWELL. OK. I think I have all of them. So I am going to start out with funeral assistance, Representative Napolitano. Again, I spent the most challenging year of my life in New York City last year and saw the devastating impacts that communities were feeling by the loss of loved ones and I think all of us here have been touched by that in some way or another. FEMA was able to implement the funeral assistance program in a way that we have never been able to do before on a scale that is much bigger than what we have done in the past.

To date, we have given out over \$400 million already in funeral assistance to individuals that experienced this loss, and we continue to do outreach with communities to make sure that they understand that this program is available for them and also making sure that—again, back to the access issue—that those that need the access to the program have access and they know how to apply for assistance.

And so working through our regional administrators as they work with their State directors, we are making sure that we are trying to get that information out to everybody so they know that this assistance is out there. It doesn't mitigate their loss, but it does help take away some of the stress that they were feeling from that loss.

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. And reduce the redtape, reduction of the redtape involved.

Ms. CRISWELL. Yes. I think right now our average award is taking less than 25 days from the time a person submits an application for funeral assistance till the time they get their reimbursement.

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Thank you.

Ms. CRISWELL. And then on your second point on mitigation and PDMG, I think that you make a great point. We don't want to build back our infrastructure to the way it was before. We want to build back stronger so we can reduce the impacts from future disasters. And we do that in a couple of ways. As communities have declared disasters and they get Public Assistance funding to repair their projects, they can also repair to a higher level through that program already. But then also after disasters we give out hazard mitigation grants to the State or the Territory that they can also use not just for those specific projects, but to talk about mitigation

efforts across their communities to help, again, increase their own resilience to future events.

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Puerto Rico—I was told they were building back to the old type of infrastructure and I found that very disturbing.

Ms. CRISWELL. Yes. FEMA provides the funding, but we don't provide authority to direct them to build back to a different level, but we work and encourage—

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. No. It was the Agency's decision, not the community's.

Ms. CRISWELL. So, again, FEMA does not have the authority to tell communities how to build, but we do work with them to let them know what their possibilities are. So they can use the funding to the most effective way possible and try to build back better, build back stronger.

And so we work with them and encourage them and give them guidance and advice as they are going through the process as to what they are eligible to do.

But the local jurisdictions will ultimately make the final decision on how they are going to repair their own infrastructure.

And then on your last point, ma'am, on the New York Times story, again, I have seen firsthand the disproportionate impacts that the communities of color experience and this was never more apparent than during my time in New York City when I watched how the communities across New York City, the underserved communities were having much greater impacts than other parts of the city.

And, again, equity is one of my top priorities as we continue to look at how we deliver our programs. It is partly because of access and we want to make sure that people have access to programs and we have seen through some of these stories that have come out that our programs don't always reach everybody that they need to reach, and that is not OK.

And I am committed and my team is working on trying to figure out and identify what these barriers to access are so we can get the assistance to those people that need it most.

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Thank you very much.

Thank you for your indulgence, Madam Chair.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you.

Mr. Graves, we are always glad to have you sit with us on this committee, but we are wondering why you don't just get assigned here so you can also have a vote as well as a voice?

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. Madam Chair, thank you. I would urge you to talk to our ranking member about that.

Administrator, thank you for joining us today and congratulations to you. The good news is, you get to head up FEMA; the bad news is, you get to inherit everything that has happened before you which is what I want to talk to you about a little bit.

First of all, I want to associate myself with the chairman's comments and really reiterating what you said about the 6-to-1 return on investment and, of course, other statistics showing it is even higher.

I represent south Louisiana, and no better place to prove the importance and the value of making proactive investments. The PDM

program, the BRIC program, hazard mitigation, all of them are critical programs that can lead to more resilient communities and ecosystems, but they are not going to work if they are not fully funded. And they are not going to work if they are siloed.

This committee also has jurisdiction over the Corps of Engineers. In many cases, we found that we're unable to use FEMA funds for these Corps of Engineer projects that are unfunded whenever those projects are the highest priority in the community. We fixed part of that in the DRRRA bill, but we still have more work to do and would love to work with you on that.

First issue I would like to bring up is school reimbursements. In 2016, we had a thousand-year flood perhaps. East Baton Rouge Parish has 29 of their 40 reimbursements outstanding and is waiting on FEMA for PW amendments right now. This represents millions of dollars. This is a school district, directly impacts the kids. Obviously not going to jump into the details with you right now, but I would like a commitment from you that you will put someone on this to full resolution. This is really important and it is impacting the school district's operations.

Ms. CRISWELL. Yes, Representative Graves. I just recently visited Louisiana last week and was impressed with the meetings that I had. And to your comment on the school districts, we need to help these communities recover, and if we don't get that funding and get them on the road to recovery, then they are just more vulnerable to the next disaster. And so, yes, you have my commitment to working with you and your team to make sure that we get these projects moving.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. OK. I will say it, again, 29 of the 40 reimbursements are outstanding and when you slip that note to your staff, if you could also add Terrebonne Parish and St. Charles Parish that have project worksheets from Hurricane Katrina and Rita in 2005 and Hurricane Gustav in 2008, totaling millions of dollars. So St. Charles, Terrebonne, and East Baton Rouge Parishes, please.

The next issue I would like to bring up is one of the great bipartisan bills we did that I referenced earlier, DRRRA. I think it made some really important reforms to FEMA—begin this paradigm shift from a reactive Agency to a proactive one.

We still have more work to do, but one of the things we did in terms of value to taxpayers is, we said that if a local government entity can implement a housing solution that is 50 percent of the cost or less than the comparable FEMA housing solution, then that local government can carry it out and get reimbursed.

I want to thank FEMA for their work with our Livingston Parish Sheriff's Office. It saved millions of dollars for the Federal taxpayers. Now with all the hurricanes you visited in southwest Louisiana recently, the sheriffs there being told this is not a Stafford-eligible expense. All I can say is that is completely bull, that we amended Stafford with DRRRA, that you all have done it once already with the Livingston Parish sheriffs.

And, look, if you want to stand in front of a microphone and tell the public that you think it is better for Federal taxpayers to pay twice as much or more for a solution, you can have at it. I am not playing any role in that and I just really appreciate you bringing

some common sense to this issue to where we don't have to relegate on this because that is pretty frustrating.

Ms. CRISWELL. I understand and appreciate your frustration with that. I think that sometimes our legislation and our statutes take some of the common sense out, but I think FEMA has demonstrated that we can put the common sense back in as you stated. And my team is working through some of the issues that you have just brought up, so we can figure out how to do this better going forward.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. Thank you. Two other things we put on your all's radar screen. We did two provisions, one related to evacuation route performance and the other one related to inundated roads that we did provisions in DRRRA. FEMA effectively issued guidance that says the same damn thing as they did before. We wouldn't have changed the law if that was our intent. Evacuation routes are not performing in a hurricane, for example, that indicates the standards are inappropriate. We need those standards updated.

In my community and Mr. Rouzer's and Mr. Webster's, these hurricane-prone areas, we can't have our main evacuation routes like interstates that are under water. Ours is I-12 and in the 2016 flood was under 6 feet of water, as I recall somewhere over 1,200 motorists stranded on the interstate that became victims that we had to then go fly food and water to and things like that. It diverted our emergency resources in that disaster, and I would like to ask you to look at those two things, please.

Lastly, Madam Chair, I just want to reiterate the comments made by the mayor about Risk Rating 2.0. Very strong concerns. We absolutely want fairness. We want risk conveyed, but very, very concerned about how that is moving forward. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Yield back.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you.

Mr. Garamendi.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Graves has brought up a series of issues, but before I get to them, congratulations. Look forward to working with you. We have got a whole host of us here that know how the Department, how FEMA could be run better. If we were so good at it, we would have sought the appointment, but we are wise. We know that it is a thankless job because there is always more to be done. We wish you well.

We may, from time to time, brow beat you, but we know that you have got a very difficult situation and it is almost always done at a time when people are traumatized and in need of great help.

So now, having set the stage for being nice, let me jump on along with everybody else. This is just one more example of the work that I know you want to do and will do, and that is trying to make it more feasible for people to get the assistance they need.

During the height of the pandemic, the food lines stretched for miles and the FEMA regulations were written in such a way as a lot of the opportunity to provide food using FEMA's authorization and money didn't happen because of a regulation or practice that

basically said that if there was another Federal source then FEMA would not participate.

And, of course, the Department of Agriculture was already there. I would ask you just to take a look at that as one of many examples within your Agency that the rules really get in the way of providing the relief that people really need.

So I will let that one just hang out there. What answer would you have besides, yeah, we need to look at it, and I suspect you will now that I have mentioned it.

There is another issue, the issue of small counties was brought up by Chairman DeFazio, but he didn't bring up a piece that I thought he would get to and that is the section 428 program. It is an alternative procedure that counties can use. Many of the small counties when they are doing their recovery programs have to front the money. They simply don't have the money to front it. Often the damage is in the multimillions and their budgets may just be in the single millions, and so they are unable to carry out the mitigation and the disaster recovery.

The section 428 program allows FEMA to front the money. And my question to you is, are you aware of this problem? If not, well, I just brought it up to you. If you could take a look at the small and rural counties and how FEMA can assist these counties by making full use of the section 428 alternative procedures under the Recovery Act.

So if you could take a look at that and next time we have a small county disaster, which will probably be any time in the near future, if you would, please, help the counties by pushing that money forward under the alternative procedures.

And I have got a minute. Once again, I think I have covered it already. It is the cash flow problem that these small counties have. Ms. Criswell, I have been talking, you have not had a chance to say, yes, yes, we will get on it. Would you like to do so?

Ms. CRISWELL. Congressman, I am familiar with the section 428 program slightly. It was something that was put in place towards the end of my previous time here at FEMA, but it is designed to help expedite the projects and get the projects moving faster. I am not familiar with the cash flow piece, so I would appreciate an opportunity to learn more about what that struggle and that challenge is, and happy to have my staff follow up with what we can do to assist.

Mr. GARAMENDI. I would appreciate it. And hopefully we'll not have another pandemic with food lines around and round the blocks, but if we do, it would be wonderful if FEMA would participate side by side with other Federal agencies rather than standing back.

Thank you so very much, and we wish you good success in your job. Look forward to working with you and we will try to brow beat you very kindly.

Thank you.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you.

Before I recognize Miss González-Colón, I would point out that the Administrator has to leave us at 4:15. She is going to the White House for a meeting. Since we want her to take all these concerns

we have to the White House with her, we will try to wrap it up by then.

Miss González-Colón.

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN. Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you, Administrator, for being with us today and also thank you for visiting Puerto Rico a few weeks ago. I was able to host you there for several meetings and I got the direct impression that you know what you are doing and you took notes on many of the issues on the island. So I appreciate that directly, and I want to say it as I said to you personally here in public.

And one of the issues that we discussed at that meeting was that the issue of a claw back when there is an error in funding from FEMA to the agencies and actually to the people. And as of last month, my office received several calls from constituents that had FEMA assistance approved for their home that was damaged in hurricanes in 2017 and they were recently called by FEMA in coordination with the IRS informing them that the assistance was given in error and they are seeking to claw back the funding.

And this is something that we discussed, and this is not new for the committee. That was the reason we co-sponsored H.R. 539, the Preventing Disaster Revictimization Act, introduced by Ranking Member Graves that will require FEMA to waive the disaster assistance debts that FEMA provided to people in error.

Is the Agency forced to do this by current law or regulation or can this can be reevaluated by the administration?

Ms. CRISWELL. Representative González-Colón, I just wanted to thank you for your time when I visited Puerto Rico.

I appreciated the information and listening to the struggles and the challenges that your communities are facing out there.

First on the claw back issue, I wanted to point out that we are currently using the waiver authority that current law has that Congress provided to us through the DRRA to waive some of those claw backs when it is an error on FEMA's part. But with this one that you are talking about now, I would really appreciate the opportunity for my team to learn more about this particular situation so we can better understand it.

But I also understand that there is legislation that is being drafted and my team stands ready to assist Congress with technical drafting assistance so we can effectively address this issue so we don't have this problem in the future.

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN. Thank you. H.R. 539 is already approved by the House. So it is in route to the Senate, and I think it is a good piece of legislation.

The other question I do have is regarding the build back better. You know that in Congress, Congressman Serrano and myself put an amendment to Section 2601 in the 2018 Bipartisan Budget Act that allow the Agency to be flexible in regards to predecessor condition, which is one of the main issues on the island, to instead rebuild to current industry standards.

And the reason we want to rebuild to the current code is so in the next storm it is more resilient and so we don't have to spend more money again and again to rebuild or replace structures multiple times when we can be up to date in the codes.

For the first years after the hurricanes in 2017, there were repeated complaints from the municipalities and the State government in spite of many occasions, projects that were in such a way to only fix what was broken by the storm, even though meeting new codes require many of the other parts of the site to be upgraded. Do you think this is still a problem?

Ms. CRISWELL. So building codes are so important, and I have been talking with some communities that have been impacted recently by disasters and they have shared with me the fact that when a community adopts stronger building codes that what they are seeing is less impact from disasters.

And so I think the first step is making sure that communities are adopting the current set of building codes so as communities are rebuilding or building that they are building to the new code.

When people are recovering, when communities are recovering and repairing or rebuilding the structures that have been damaged during a disaster and a Presidentially declared disaster, again, FEMA does not have the authority to tell them what to build to unless it is to the current code.

And we do provide additional mitigation funding so they don't have to build back to the previous state, but they can incorporate some increased hardening and resiliency to make them stronger against future disasters.

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN. Madam Secretary, I just want to say thank you to your office and all the FEMA employees on the island. They are helping the island, more than 1,000 employees since 2017. So this is not new. I mean, they have been working there. We are right now in the hurricane season. We got earthquakes last 2 years.

So I know FEMA has had boots on the ground since 2017, and I hope we can continue to work together to have a more resilient Puerto Rico. So thank you, Madam Chair.

And I yield back.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you. Before I recognize Mr. Rouzer, I would like to ask the Administrator—we talked about this earlier and you mentioned it in your opening remarks how important it is to get the best workforce possible to deal with some of these disasters.

And I wonder if given your experience with the National Guard what you think about providing USERRA-like protections to Americans who want to go and be helpful, but they can't because they won't have their jobs when they come back home.

Do you think that is something that we could work on together to help you build that better workforce?

Ms. CRISWELL. I think it is an important point. I spent 21 years in the Air National Guard and having USERRA protection allowed me to support the duty to my Nation and know that I had a job when I came back. And you are right. It is not a protection that we currently have for the largest part of our workforce, which is our reservist workforce.

So I would appreciate the opportunity to continue to work with you on whether or not we can make that a reality for the FEMA reservist workforce.

Ms. TITUS. Great. I look forward to that too.

Mr. Rouzer.

Mr. ROUZER. Thank you, Madam Chair.

And Madam Administrator, congratulations on your new post, your new assignment, and I know you will do great. I want to follow up on some of the comments that my colleagues made previously, and I have similar issues, obviously, in my district, all of us that deal with hurricanes and floods and natural disasters seems like on an annual basis seem to have the same problems, obviously.

There are two towns, in particular, I want to highlight and I want to mention, and if you don't mind, if you can help me out with these two in terms of getting their reimbursement.

I heard mention about small counties, and small towns too when they are putting up millions of dollars, \$10, \$14, \$20 million, whatever it is, and they are set to be reimbursed through the Public Assistance program from FEMA, but they don't get the reimbursement for a year or more.

I know when Hurricane Matthew hit in 2016, I had some communities that didn't get reimbursed for a long, long time. Our North Carolina DOT was not reimbursed for their expenditures for far more than a year, as I recall, and in this particular case with Hurricane Florence, the town of Surf City and the town of Topsail Beach, both of them are still waiting for pretty significant reimbursement—the town of Surf City approximately \$10.6 million and the town of Topsail Beach, pretty significant sum as well.

Would you mind looking into those two, in particular? Both have waited more than a year. I believe they submitted their request March a year ago and, of course, obviously that has been a little more than a year since then.

Ms. CRISWELL. Absolutely. I don't, obviously, know the specifics of those two, but I am happy to get the details and get back to your team and your staff with the status.

Mr. ROUZER. I appreciate that very much because when they don't get those reimbursements, it is very hard to plan and prepare for the next storm. And like I said, in 2016, we had Matthew, then 2018 we had Florence. And 2019 and 2020, we escaped disaster, but very, very narrowly. And I expect 2021 to make us a little nervous as well.

Following up on one other issue for the town of Topsail Beach, they have submitted updated lidar data, but the revised FIRM maps don't reflect those updates at all, and it has some pretty substantial impact for more than 400 homes there. And the town makes a very, very good case that the data that was used for the original set of maps is just not accurate. In fact, you know, really off.

Would you mind checking into that as well?

Ms. CRISWELL. Absolutely. Again, I am not familiar with the specifics, but I will have my team get back to you with the status of them.

Mr. ROUZER. That would be great. And then one question for me just to help me understand. You have got Risk Rating 2.0 that was mentioned previously by a colleague that I happened to hear his question and how does that overlay with—you know, you are supposed to have these new flood maps every 5 to 7 years and it takes

forever to get them done and then here you got Risk Rating 2.0 that is set to go in effect.

Is that just going to override the preliminary flood maps when you get those finalized, or how is that going to work? I would just like to know from an educational standpoint.

Ms. CRISWELL. I do not believe that it overrides. Risk Rating 2.0 is really looking at the individual risk for each person's home and the flood maps are a part of that.

But it goes into other pieces of the risk related to their home as well, but we can certainly get a better definition and clarification for you so you understand how the two interrelate.

Mr. ROUZER. OK. Well, I have got more than 400 homes there on that particular beach that basically would not be eligible for flood insurance and it is all based on faulty data, and I want to get—whether it is Risk Rating 2.0 or whether it is the latest version of the flood maps that directly affects them, I would like to make sure that at least those who are putting in place these policies know what the correct data is.

Ms. CRISWELL. Absolutely.

Mr. ROUZER. Thank you, ma'am.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you.

Thank you very much, Administrator. You have been very helpful and very patient.

Mr. Webster, any final remarks.

Mr. WEBSTER. What a great meeting.

Ms. TITUS. All right. Well, I will then conclude our hearing and like to thank you, again, for your testimony. It has been very informative, helpful to us as we do policy and try to provide you the resources that you need to get the job done.

I will ask unanimous consent that the record of today's hearing remain open until such time as our witness has provided answers to any questions that may have been submitted.

I will also ask unanimous consent that the record remain open for 15 days for any additional comments and information submitted by Members to be included in the record of today's hearing.

Without objection, so ordered.

The subcommittee stands adjourned.

Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 4:12 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

SUBMISSIONS FOR THE RECORD

Prepared Statement of Hon. Sam Graves, a Representative in Congress from the State of Missouri, and Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Thank you, Chair Titus, and welcome to the new FEMA Administrator, Ms. Criswell.

As FEMA's committee of primary jurisdiction, we have worked on a bipartisan basis over the years to improve our Nation's emergency management system.

While there have been reforms and improvements to FEMA processes, there is still a lot that needs to happen to speed up recovery from disasters and build in mitigation.

Just last week, a bill I introduced, H.R. 539, the Preventing Disaster Revictimization Act, passed the House.

For more than a decade, we were told FEMA was working to reduce its error rate in individual assistance, yet little progress was made.

H.R. 539 ensures that at the very least, disaster victims don't pay the price for FEMA's errors.

FEMA's process can be too confusing and bureaucratic for both individuals and states impacted by disasters.

As highlighted in FEMA's FY22 Budget, FEMA's mission is, "to help people before, during, and after disasters."

We need to ensure FEMA is doing just that.

I look forward to working with you, Ms. Criswell, on how we can improve our disaster preparedness and response and recovery system.

Thank you, Chair Titus. I yield back.

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