



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson

“Disaster Declarations, Where is FEMA in a Time of Need?”

March 15, 2007 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled “Disaster Declarations, Where is FEMA in a Time of Need?”:

“In the wake of recent tornados in Arkansas, Alabama and Georgia, FEMA has received mixed reviews. I called this hearing today to examine just how FEMA is doing.

As Members representing real communities back home, we want to understand just how FEMA makes determinations regarding what is a disaster deserving attention and when folks have to fend for themselves.

Quite simply, we must have a serious discussion on what our expectations are of our Federal government and what should remain a state and local responsibility. Once we are clear on what we expect from FEMA, then we must make sure that it administers assistance swiftly and in an evenhanded way.

In addition, I am interested in discussing ways to use the thousands of trailers and mobile homes that FEMA has sitting across the country. If FEMA can cut through the red tape to get trailers to a community in Desha County, Arkansas 2 weeks after a tornado strikes, then what is stopping it from helping others? If FEMA feels like its hands are tied in utilizing the excess temporary housing units that were purchased in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, then Congress needs to do some un-tying.

We need to give Mr. Paulison and his team at FEMA the ability to help people in need.

Finally, Admiral Johnson, I would like to take this opportunity to remind you that the Committee requested documentation on FEMA’s emergency housing life cycle costs, including contracts for the hauling and installing of these units. We were expecting a response by February 28th. I hope you will help facilitate getting this information to my staff in the very near future.”

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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