

**Chairman Shelley Moore Capito Opening Statement
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security**

**Hearing to Review the FY2020 Budget Request for the Federal Emergency Management
Agency**

April 3, 2019

(As prepared for delivery)

Welcome. I call this hearing of the Subcommittee on Homeland Security to order. This is the Subcommittee's second hearing of the Fiscal Year 2020 budget cycle, and we are reviewing the budget request for the Federal Emergency Management Agency—FEMA.

We appreciate FEMA's Acting Administrator, Peter Gaynor, joining us today to help us better understand the important ongoing work of FEMA and how this year's budget request supports that work. This is Mr. Gaynor's first appearance before this Subcommittee.

As always, I am pleased to be seated next to Ranking Member Senator Tester. He and I are continuing our work together to review the Fiscal Year 2020 budget request for the entire Department of Homeland Security, and today's hearing is a very important piece of that work.

FEMA's mission is "Helping people before, during, and after disasters." Acting Administrator Gaynor has a big job.

We are all keeping a close eye on the flooding that is occurring right now in our heartland. We have also been following the recent string of devastating tornadoes across the Southeast, particularly in Alabama. Mr. Gaynor and the men and women of FEMA are at the tip of the spear when it comes to responding to these types of disasters. In fiscal year 2018, FEMA deployed 20,622 of its own personnel, 4,053 Surge Capacity Force personnel, and 327 FEMA Corps personnel to disaster operations. As we will be reminded today, the men and women of FEMA perform a diverse and challenging array of duties, but when an area of our country is hit with tragedy, every FEMA employee is an emergency manager. You should consider this Subcommittee part of your team.

In addition to being ready enough and agile enough to respond to disasters as they pop up, FEMA is often charged with the complexities of coordinating the long-term recovery of U.S. states and territories that are hit with particularly catastrophic disasters. Many Americans might be shocked to know that FEMA is still doing important work to complete recovery from hurricanes that occurred well over a decade ago. We know that recovery from more recent hurricanes—Harvey, Irma, Maria, Florence, and Michael in particular—will not happen overnight, but we should all hope that the areas

affected can quickly recover to the point that assistance from the federal government is no longer needed there.

We also ask FEMA to play an important role in helping communities prepare for and mitigate against future disasters. This means that the men and women of FEMA are engaging with state, local, tribal, and territorial partners every day to coordinate, plan, train, and build. The hope is that these investments today will save American lives and taxpayer resources tomorrow.

In fiscal year 2019, Senator Tester and I worked to ensure the Disaster Relief Fund, which is the primary tool FEMA uses to help communities respond to and recover from disasters, has sufficient funding to meet present and future needs. The appropriations bill we worked to get enacted earlier this year provided more than 12 billion dollars for the Disaster Relief Fund. To put this number in perspective, in fiscal year 2019, the Disaster Relief Fund represented approximately 76 percent of FEMA's total appropriation.

The budget request for fiscal year 2020 includes more than 19 billion dollars for the Disaster Relief Fund, but it is my understanding that this estimate was formulated prior to the recent enactment of our 2019 bill. We look forward to working with Mr. Gaynor and his team to stay up to date on the revised funding level that will be necessary in fiscal year 2020.

The work of this Subcommittee has also led to historic investments in training, preparedness, and mitigation. While we are pleased that this funding is enabling FEMA to invest in the resilience of American communities, it is important for us to better understand the specific return the American taxpayers are getting for this investment. We know FEMA is working to implement the Disaster Recovery Reform Act, which became law last year, and we look forward to working with FEMA to ensure that the changes made to mitigation grant programs by that law are implemented appropriately and responsibly.

Finally, like most Federal agencies, FEMA's efficient operations are dependent on modern technology. We note the budget request's emphasis on targeted investments in information technology system improvements, and we will continue our work to ensure you have the tools you need to do your job well and make the greatest impact possible before, during, and after disaster strikes.

I saw the impact FEMA has and can have when a devastating flash flood hit West Virginia in June of 2016. We lost 23 lives that day. Hundreds of homes were destroyed. Damages totaled many millions of dollars. Three years later we remember those we lost, and recognize the ongoing efforts to rebuild. FEMA was there when tragedy struck, and has there been throughout. I would like to thank you and

your Region III Administrator MaryAnn Tierney for your continued attention to the recovery. I see the importance of the follow up, the communication, and the support that FEMA can provide. We still have so much to do in West Virginia as a result of these floods. From community leaders, elected officials, volunteer organizations, and state government, our efforts need to continue in the most effective and efficient ways possible. So thank you—given all of the challenges you face—for continuing to make West Virginia families and communities a priority.

Administrator Gaynor — thank you for appearing before us today. We will make sure you and your team keep us up to date on what resources you need to continue the good work you are doing.

I will now turn to our distinguished Ranking Member, Senator Tester for any opening remarks he may have before asking our witness to proceed with his testimony.

Then, we will allow each Senator, in order of arrival, seven minutes for any statements or questions they may have.

Thank you. Senator Tester.

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