



March 19, 2021



THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON:

March Madness

After emerging from the all-consuming task of passing a coronavirus relief package in the past few months, there was a veritable March Madness of hearings this week on a broad range of issues, but several were related to emergency management.

On Tuesday, state directors Curtis Brown (VA), Mark Ghilarducci (CA), and Patrick Sheehan (TN) testified before the House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Homeland Security on the role of FEMA and emergency management in COVID-19 response. The directors emphasized the importance of EMPG supplemental funding from the CARES Act, the need to prioritize equity in COVID-19 response and traditional disaster response and recovery, the challenges of simultaneous responses this year, and lessons learned from the pandemic. Some recommendations included building equity into FEMA policies and programs, building emergency management enterprise capacity, defining the Strategic National Stockpile's (SNS) mission and developing triggers for invoking the Defense Production Act (DPA), creating a universal application for disaster survivors, raising the small projects threshold, ensuring FEMA policy consistency, and designating FEMA the federal lead during nationwide incidents. Other witnesses were Acting FEMA Administrator Bob Fenton and Los Angeles County Office of Emergency Management Director Kevin McGowan. [Watch the hearing and read the testimonies here.](#)

On Wednesday, DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas testified before the House Committee on Homeland Security on *The Way Forward on Homeland Security*. Issues related to the border and immigration were top of mind for many of the members, as well as the impact of threats to critical infrastructure, cybersecurity, shared vulnerabilities between the public and private sectors, and the rise of domestic violent extremism. [Watch the hearing and read the testimony here.](#)

Then on Thursday, state director Russ Strickland (MD) testified on behalf of NEMA on the importance of investing in resilience and mitigation before the House Transportation & Infrastructure Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management. Director Strickland underscored the benefits of investing in mitigation pre-disaster, integrating community lifelines into resilience efforts, the need for public-private partnership, and the role of building codes in avoiding losses in disasters. Recommendations included ensuring that the full six percent of eligible disaster expenditures are set aside every year for BRIC, that there be federal support for adopting appropriate building codes without taking punitive steps, reducing the complexity of federal programs so states and localities can utilize programs effectively, and allowing for co-mingling of grant funds for better linkage of project priorities. [Watch the hearing, view the full witness list, and read the testimonies here.](#)

NCAA March Madness kicks off this weekend (Go Orange!) and hearing madness continues next week with FEMA Administrator-designate Deanne Criswell's hearing before the Senate Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Committee (HSGAC) Thursday morning as a headliner event (information below).

Hearings the Week of March 22, 2021

[LIFT America: Revitalizing Our Nation's Infrastructure and Economy](#)

House Committee on Energy & Commerce

Monday, March 22, 11:00am ET

[State and Local Responses to Domestic Terrorism: The Attack on the U.S. Capitol and Beyond](#)

House Committee on Homeland Security

Wednesday, March 24, 9:30am ET

[Preparing for Future Crises: Examining the National Response Enterprise](#)

Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs

Wednesday, March 24, 10:00am ET

[Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention](#)

House Committee on Appropriations

Wednesday, March 24, 10:00am ET

[Nomination of Deanne B. Criswell to be Administrator, FEMA DHS](#)

Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs

Thursday, March 25, 10:15am ET

More News from the Nation's Capital...

House Bill Introduced to Minimize Federal Bailouts of Repeated Community Flooding

Representatives Ann Wagner (R-MO) and Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) introduced legislation to strengthen protections for flood-prone communities by incentivizing repeatedly flooded communities to submit flood prevention plans to FEMA as a condition of their participation in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). It also sets deadlines for FEMA to develop criteria on how to govern these plans and determine next steps for communities which fail to act. A version of this legislation did pass the House in 2017 but was not acted upon by the Senate. Additional information will be provided as it is available.

\$110 Million Supplemental Humanitarian Funding to Assist Migrants Through FEMA ESFP

FEMA awarded \$110 million in supplemental humanitarian funding to the National Board for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (ESFP), which will then be awarded to eligible local nonprofits and governmental organizations and state governmental facilities that are aiding individuals and families encountered by DHS at the southern U.S. border.

State government facilities will apply through their ESFP State Set-Aside (SSA) Committee, others through their local ESFP boards. All awards are competitive. Additional information is [available here](#).

DHS OIG: FEMA Needs Revised Policies and Procedures to Better Manage Recovery of Disallowed Grant Funds

The DHS Office of Inspector General (OIG) released its final report aimed at improving FEMA's process for recovering disallowed grant funds. FEMA allowed most of the costs DHS OIG questioned for noncompliance with procurement regulations based on reasonableness of costs rather than addressing the deficiencies. The recommendations made to improve these processes include developing and implementing a policy that requires corrective action plans in the event of a found deficiency, updating FEMA Directive 116-1 to require regional program offices to maintain records and track the status of referred debt, directing the Office of the Chief Financial Officer to provide updates on debt recovery to the appropriate regional offices, reviewing and updating applicable policies to reflect statute of limitations changes created by the DRRRA, and revising FEMA's process to routinely review internal policies and procedures when laws change to ensure they remain compliant with federal law.

[Read the report here.](#)

Other News from DC and Around the Country:

New York Times: [Chuck Schumer Stalls Climate Overhaul of Flood Insurance Program](#)

StateScoop: [Connecticut to Consolidate IT into Single Agency](#)

Buzzfeed News: [The US is Opening a New Facility to Handle the Thousands of Children Entering Border Patrol Custody](#)

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