



NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

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February 4, 2009

The Honorable Joseph Lieberman
The Honorable Susan Collins
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Lieberman and Ranking Member Collins:

On behalf of the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA), I am writing to urge you to reject calls to remove Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to make FEMA a stand-alone agency.

While the NSA agrees that FEMA should be strengthened, we continue to believe that removing FEMA from DHS would lead to a confused chain of command during emergency situations, potentially lead to separate rules for training and exercises, and increase response time by adding more steps to the process. Moreover, the NSA is gravely concerned about the shifting of law enforcement grants, yet again, and the possibility of further reduction of these grant programs that are critical to the nation's sheriffs for counter-terrorism efforts should FEMA be removed from DHS.

Federal, State, and local first responders must work in a coordinated manner with a clear chain of command in any disaster response, whether the event is natural or man-made. By establishing two federal entities, DHS and an independent FEMA, that chain of command could blur, and the link between preparedness and response could erode.

Furthermore, it would impede on the dramatic steps made by FEMA in fostering partnership among various emergency response providers and significant progress for interagency coordination under DHS leadership. These coordinated efforts have helped ensure that the nation's sheriffs are able to provide the most effective and efficient assistance to the people who have entrusted their safety to us.

We ask that you carefully consider the concerns of America's first responders when considering how to strengthen the federal government's emergency management capabilities. Thank you for your continued leadership and strong support for the nation's sheriffs in Congress on counter-terrorism and effective emergency response efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David A. Goad".

Sheriff David A. Goad
President