

**Opening Statement  
W. Craig Fugate, Nominee  
Administrator, FEMA  
United States Senate  
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs  
  
April 22, 2009, 10:00 a.m., 342 Dirksen Senate Office Building**

Good morning Mr. Chairman, Senator Collins, and Members of the Committee. My name is Craig Fugate. I'd like to start by thanking Senators Nelson and Martinez for their kind introductions. It has been a privilege working with them in Florida during my tenure as State Director of Emergency Management.

I come before you today as the nominee for Administrator of FEMA. I am very honored by the President's nomination and pleased to be here today to address your questions as you consider my nomination. It is a privilege to be considered to contribute one's expertise and experience to further our nation's preparedness for, response to, recovery from, and mitigation against disasters and emergencies at this important moment in our history.

In preparing for this hearing, I had an opportunity to reflect on some key events in my career. I began as a volunteer firefighter, paramedic, and then Lieutenant with Alachua County Fire Rescue. I then served as the Emergency Manager and a first responder for Alachua County, Florida, and had a 15 year career in local government.

Today, as the Director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management since October of 2001 – and as an employee of the Division since 1997 – I have served as the State Coordinating Officer in twenty-three (23) Declared State Emergencies, eleven (11) of which resulted in Presidential Disaster Declarations that received over \$4.5 billion in

federal assistance. In December of 2006, Florida Governor Charlie Crist reappointed me as Director.

During my tenure as Director in 2004, Florida was impacted by 4 major land-falling hurricanes (Charley, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne) setting a record in both numbers of storms as well as damages for the State of Florida. Again in 2005, Florida was impacted by 4 hurricanes with Hurricane Dennis and Wilma striking as major hurricanes (Category 3 or greater). 2005 also saw Florida's largest mutual aid response to another state due to the impacts of Hurricane Katrina along the Mississippi Coast. Over 7,000 responders from state and local agencies provided assistance to the Mississippi and local communities, and additional resources from Florida were sent to Louisiana.

Although it is well known that Florida annually faces the threat of major hurricanes, we have been impacted by all types of hazards, both natural and man-made. During my time with the Division, we have responded – in close cooperation with our Federal, state, local, and private sector partners – to a multitude of fires, floods, severe storms, and other hazards. Therefore, following the events of September 11, 2001, the Division was tasked with the role of managing the Federal Homeland Security funding and developing Florida's Domestic Security Strategy with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. Today, Florida's program is recognized as a model for other states.

If confirmed as the next FEMA Administrator, I will address the concerns and seek the active engagement of the many state and local officials, private sector companies, and individual citizens who play key roles in our nation's emergency management system. In addition, I will work closely with Secretary Napolitano, who seeks to create a unified vision for the Department of Homeland Security. In my State

role, I have experienced the negative consequences of parochial lines and the failure to communicate across those lines. We must and will streamline those communications both within FEMA and throughout DHS to make certain the right people have the right information at the right time to take the right action.

And if confirmed, I will re-double FEMA's efforts to work with our key stakeholders – State, local and tribal governments, voluntary organizations, faith-based organizations, and the private sector – to work together, as a Nation, to protect against, prepare for, respond to, and recover from all hazards. I do not subscribe to the “domino theory” of emergency management, where one level of government must fail before the next level takes action. Rather, I will use the authorities granted to the Administrator by this Congress to ensure that the closest available resources will be made available to address the needs of disaster survivors.

I also would like to offer a few comments with respect to the ongoing recovery efforts from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. As you know, Secretary Napolitano has instituted a dynamic recovery framework that is already producing positive results. Under her leadership, coupled with the aggressive actions already taken by Acting Administrator Nancy Ward, I believe that we are seeing concrete progress on recovery in the Gulf Coast Region. If confirmed, I will continue to implement the strategies that have been initiated by the Secretary.

However, rather than looking back at Katrina and Rita, I believe that it is critical to focus on FEMA's preparedness – for all types of disasters – moving forward. Judging FEMA's future success on the basis of whether it is “better than Katrina” is not viable. Although the media may use the failures of Katrina and Rita as a standard of

measurement for judging the effectiveness of government, this standard does not, in my opinion, meet our sworn commitment to the American people. Therefore, if confirmed, I commit to meeting the demonstrated recovery needs of the Gulf Coast, and at the same time, I will hold FEMA's future response and recovery missions to a much higher standard of success.

I also believe that a close working relationship with Congress and with this Committee is essential. I recognize this Committee's expertise, and I will cooperate fully with the Committee and its important oversight functions. I also look forward to the Committee's assistance with and support for identifying ways to make the work of FEMA more effective and efficient. After all, we share a common goal: a strong and vigorous national emergency management system.

In closing, the Congress has set the bar very high for FEMA, DHS, and the Nation. I would welcome the opportunity to accept that challenge and respectfully ask this committee to confirm my nomination to serve as Administrator of FEMA. I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to appear before you, and I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.