

OPENING STATEMENT
RANKING MEMBER ROB PORTMAN
NOMINATION HEARING: DEANNE B. CRISWELL TO BE ADMINISTRATOR,
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
HOMELAND SECURITY

March 25, 2021

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks to my colleague Senator Gillibrand for introducing Ms. Criswell.

I enjoyed our conversation, and as we talked about, FEMA plays an incredibly important role always—but particularly now.

- Not just with the natural disasters we've recently encountered but with the work that FEMA is doing along the border as we deal with the influx of unaccompanied kids and others.

You've got a lot of experience, 25 years of experience, working in emergency management at the state, local, and even the federal level.

- I'm glad you had that time with the National Guard in Colorado as well because you led emergency management units while being deployed in Afghanistan, Iraq and Qatar.
- So that experience is very important.

The next FEMA Administrator will lead more than 21,000 staff so it's a big management job.

- The budget is \$74 billion, and again, we've got plenty of natural disasters that need to be coordinated.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has made that more difficult.
- We just had a historic hurricane season and then again what's going on at the southern border to name some of the important

issues.

One of the things I want to focus on today is how every state is different.

- And how we need to be sure that at the FEMA leadership level, there's an understanding of that.

Ohioans have been provided significant support, thanks to FEMA, \$100 million in emergency protective measures.

- \$1.4 billion in lost wages assistance.
- Just last week, FEMA launched a mass vaccination clinic in Cleveland, Ohio to administer 6,000 doses a day, prioritizing high-risk Ohioans and underserved populations.
- So again, FEMA is playing a big role that some are not aware of, even with regard to COVID-19 vaccinations.

The tragic attacks that we have seen at synagogues and other places of worship over the past decade which have increased, have led FEMA to play a bigger role in what's called the Nonprofit Security Grant Program.

- Senator Peters and I have spent a lot of time working on this and increased the funding, but also just managed to pass an authorization for another five years.
- This is an area where, as you know from our conversation, I have a strong interest and my hope is this Nonprofit Security Grant Program is something that you will focus on personally to ensure that the appropriated funding continues to be there for these purposes.
- There's a lot of demand, sadly, right now for this.

- But also to be sure that the appropriated funding comes with increased responsibility for guarding against fraud or waste or certainly abuse of taxpayer funds.

So, Commissioner Criswell, I look forward to hearing what you will do to address these issues should you be confirmed.

- I appreciate your willingness to serve, again, at a time when our country is facing some of these unprecedented challenges.
- And I look forward to the discussion today regarding your thoughts on the role FEMA can play in response.