

Prepared Testimony
Peter T. Gaynor, Nominee
Administrator, FEMA
United States Senate
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
November 14, 2019

Introduction:

Good morning Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Peters, and distinguished members of this Committee. My name is Pete Gaynor, and it is a privilege to appear before you today as President Donald Trump's nominee to the position of Administrator for the Federal Emergency Management Agency. I am once again honored to have been nominated by the President for this critical emergency management leadership role. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing our work to build a more resilient and prepared Nation.

I would first like to recognize a few members of my family and friends that are here today, my wife Sue and my brother Paul. Thank you all for being here today. I am truly grateful for the support you all have given me.

To the members of this Committee, I would like to thank you for the support and trust you placed in me during my last confirmation hearing in June of 2018 for the position of FEMA Deputy Administrator. Since my first day at FEMA in October 2018, a little over a year ago, I have had the pleasure of serving the agency as both the Deputy and as the Acting FEMA Administrator. In these roles, I have traveled the country, engaging with our dedicated, mission-focused workforce. I firmly believe FEMA has the best mission in federal government. I have seen firsthand the dedication our employees exhibit – from FEMA Corps members, to our incident workforce, local hires, reservists, and full-time employees – FEMA employees are devoted to helping people before, during, and after disasters.

Each response must be locally executed, state managed and federally supported. We cannot accomplish this mission alone; it requires mature and strong partnerships at the state, local, tribal, and territorial levels. It requires a firm bond with our voluntary, non-governmental, and private partners. It requires a prepared citizenry across neighborhoods, businesses, and communities. Not to be forgotten is our many mission partners; from the DHS Surge Capacity Force, to the Department of Defense, to the American Red Cross and many, many others that make our success possible. It's only through this unity of effort that the Nation can be fully prepared for the next major disaster or catastrophic event.

Background/Experience:

Briefly, I would like to describe my background, experience and qualifications for the position for which I have been nominated. I spent twenty-six years serving my country in the United States Marine Corps as an enlisted Marine and subsequently as a Commissioned Officer. I have learned how to succeed in chaotic situations, use intellect to overcome daunting obstacles, to never quit, and most importantly, that personal integrity is paramount.

I know first-hand the importance of effective emergency response and the Homeland Security mission. In 2006, I deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom with the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) and assisted with the coordination of combat operations in the Al-Anbar Province of Iraq for Multi-National and Marine forces. I served at Marine Corps Headquarters as the Head of Plans, Policy, and Operations and personally witnessed the attack on the Pentagon and our country on September 11, 2001. Prior to September 11, 2001, I served as the Executive Officer responsible for the security of the President at Camp David.

After retiring from the Marine Corps in late 2007, I transitioned into the field of emergency management, serving as the Emergency Management Director for both the City of Providence and the

State of Rhode Island. As previously stated, I have served as the Deputy FEMA Administrator and as the Acting FEMA Administrator for over a year. I believe my time as an emergency manager, combined with my military service, has given me a unique perspective on the challenges for the position for which I am nominated and for improving capabilities for preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery across the Nation.

Looking Forward:

It is imperative that the American people have the highest level of trust and confidence in FEMA's capabilities. This agency is often the last line of hope when a disaster strikes and cripples a community. We must be able to perform the delivery of life-saving, life-sustaining resources on that community's worst day. We continue to champion our Strategic Plan, focusing on three key goals for the entire emergency management community; first to Build a Culture of Preparedness, second to Ready the Nation for Catastrophic Disasters and third to Reduce the Complexity of FEMA.

This job is about people – the disaster survivors we serve and the individuals who serve them. The FEMA Team continues to provide hurricane recovery support from the Caribbean, to the flooded US central plains, western wildfires and to the typhoons of the Northern Mariana Islands. It is my firm belief that if we take care of and empower the people of FEMA, then these dedicated public servants will deliver meaningful and much needed assistance to our citizens when they need it the most. The Nation is counting on us to accomplish our mission and we will do it in accordance with our Core Values of Compassion, Fairness, Integrity, and Respect. We are the sole owners of this mission and each employee must be an embodiment of these Core Values.

This month we are going to release our capstone doctrine, FEMA Publication 1 entitled, *We are FEMA*. It explains who we are, why we are here, what we face, what we do and how we do it. With our core values as its guide, it will provide direction for how we conduct ourselves and make the best decisions for the Agency and the disaster survivor. It will promote unity of purpose, guides professional judgement, and enables each employee to fulfill their responsibilities. This document, coupled with our FEMA Strategic Plan, and our soon to be released Blueprint for Business Excellence, will serve as the roadmap for the future of Agency.

We are not perfect. We must accept responsibility for our shortcomings and seek out solutions so our mistakes will not be repeated. However, for any failure we may have, I can show you countless success stories, large and small, that have made a difference in bettering the lives of disaster survivors and furthering the preparedness of the Nation. Every day, the men and women of FEMA make me proud.

During my time as the Acting FEMA Administrator and, if confirmed as Administrator, my priority will continue to be the people of FEMA, who guarantee our success and the readiness of the Nation.

Conclusion:

If confirmed, it will be my honor to serve in one of the most challenging jobs of government—helping people before, during, and after disasters.

I can think of no higher honor than serving the American people as FEMA Administrator. Thank you for your consideration of my nomination and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.