

**Opening Statement**  
**Joseph L. Nimmich, Nominee**  
**Deputy Administrator, FEMA**  
**United States Senate**  
**Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs**  
**July 24, 2014 – 4:00 PM, 342 Dirksen Senate Office Building**

Good afternoon, Chairman Begich, Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Coburn, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

I come before you as the nominee for the Deputy Administrator of FEMA. I am humbled by the President's nomination and honored by the opportunity to continue to serve my country. Before I begin, I'd like to start by thanking my wife, Cindy, and my children Lizzie, Abby, and Mallory, for joining me. I'd also like to thank my daughters Katie and Becky who are unable to attend today due to scheduling difficulties. I would not be here without their love, support, and patience for the times my job has taken me away from home. I'd also like to take a moment to thank Administrator Fugate for his leadership, counsel, and trust he has afforded me.

As a Coast Guard Officer for over 33 years, I have developed the leadership skills, federal management experience, and strategic and operational decision making ability to help lead FEMA. I'd like to take a moment to tell you how I believe my experiences have prepared me for this opportunity.

As former Commanding Officer of Coast Guard Key West, I am personally aware of the challenges facing local communities as they work hard to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. During that assignment, I worked closely with city and county officials to ensure that response plans were coordinated and that resources were delivered efficiently and effectively to support those in need. I have seen firsthand the issues facing local emergency managers as they balance the many competing requirements of local government.

As Director for Joint Interagency Task Force – South, I worked with interagency and international partners and navigated the opportunities and challenges involved in the interagency coordination process. I served tours at Coast Guard headquarters, where I managed the federal budget process, developed strategic plans, and instituted performance-based management tools. If confirmed, I will continue to leverage this experience to help FEMA improve its core capabilities and build on FEMA’s interagency disaster response processes.

I’ve also shouldered great responsibility—not just for budgets and plans, but for the well-being of our men and women in uniform. One of my proudest and most humbling experiences with the Coast Guard was providing for the safety and well-being of my crew through three afloat commands and three ashore commands. When in command you must be able to rapidly and correctly assess any situation and effectively make critical decisions. My experience in the Coast Guard helped me develop quick decision-making ability, based on the best information available, that I continue to use to achieve FEMA’s mission in support of disaster survivors.

Over the past year as FEMA’s Associate Administrator for Response and Recovery, I have overseen a number of disaster responses across the country, including: the tornadoes in Moore, Oklahoma; the floods in Galena, Alaska and across Colorado; and the mudslide in Washington State. Throughout these operations, I worked with my team to hone FEMA’s ability to employ both traditional recovery capabilities and alternate procedures, cutting through bureaucratic challenges to help disaster survivors and communities recover and rebuild. In every case, I have looked for lessons to improve FEMA’s performance in the next disaster.

If confirmed as FEMA Deputy Administrator, my focus will be threefold: to steady the FEMA disaster workforce; to stabilize FEMA’s policies; and to develop data analytics to support rapid, effective, and efficient decision making. To this end, I will focus on effective management

of FEMA processes—particularly human resources, information technology systems and security, and contracting acquisition—all of which form the foundation necessary to reinforce a strong workforce that can effectively respond to and support the Nation in times of disaster. We also need to better define FEMA’s policies, simplifying and streamlining them whenever possible. Finally, we must harness geospatial technology to more swiftly respond to the impacts of disasters in real time. Developing FEMA’s critical analytic capability will allow us to more effectively utilize existing information systems for swift, sound decision making.

I believe that fostering a close working relationship with Congress is critical to delivering the highest level of service to the American people. If confirmed, I will continue to build relationships with you and your colleagues to ensure Congress has access to the information it needs to fulfill its oversight mission. I will also continue to work with the full spectrum of federal agencies within the Executive Branch, particularly with the Office of Management and Budget, Inspector General, and Government Accountability Office. I will use my financial management skills to implement a metrics-based approach to improve budgeting efficiency and establish measurable outcomes across all FEMA program areas.

Providing states, survivors, and communities with the resources they need in an efficient and effective manner is my primary focus. Based on our conversations during the previous hearing, I have no doubt that this Committee’s focus is the same. The American people deserve an emergency management workforce that is capable, competent, and prepared to meet the challenges of the future. It is my hope that if I am confirmed, I can continue to help strengthen FEMA’s workforce and develop and improve upon its core capabilities, sustaining the organization into the future as a well-managed, performance-focused agency able to meet the expectations of the Nation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to appear before you. I look forward to your questions.