

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4704

June 16, 2017

The Honorable John Kelly
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
301 7th Street S.W.
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable John Michael Mulvaney
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Secretary Kelly and Director Mulvaney,

I write regarding the Administration's proposed cuts to FEMA-administered grant programs in its fiscal year 2018 budget request. \$847 million in proposed cuts to FEMA-administered grant programs would jeopardize the emergency preparedness and public safety of communities across Washington state, and eliminate funding for many of the dedicated first responders and emergency managers who serve them.

As you are aware, Washington state has sustained 13 Federally-declared Major Disasters and received tens of millions of dollars in recovery and mitigation funds from FEMA over the past decade. Unfortunately, the proposed cuts to FEMA-administered grant programs would diminish the capacity of the State and local governments to mitigate against, respond to, and recover from natural and man-made disasters. Ultimately, reduced capacity at the sub-federal level will lead to the federal government bearing more disaster-related costs in the future, erasing any initial savings achieved by these cuts. Beyond fiscal policy considerations, the federal government first and foremost has a responsibility to protect Americans against natural and man-made threats. These proposed cuts would breach that obligation. As such, I respectfully request you clarify the following:

- The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) fiscal year 2018 budget request characterizes many of these cuts as a necessary to "ensure adequate funding for core [DHS] missions;" does the Administration believe that disaster preparedness and emergency management fall outside DHS' core mission set? Please explain.
- From 2012 to 2016, the United States experienced an average of 10.6 billion-dollar disaster events per year, more than double the annual average over the preceding 32 years, even after adjusting for inflation.¹ Should the federal government ensure that its various forms of material and financial assistance keep pace with this increased

¹ Smith, Adam B. "2016: A historic year for billion-dollar weather and climate disasters in U.S." Climate.gov. January 9, 2017. Accessed June 6, 2017. <https://www.climate.gov/news-features/blogs/beyond-data/2016-historic-year-billion-dollar-weather-and-climate-disasters-us>.

frequency of large scale disasters? If not, please explain which entities should bear these costs

- As you are aware, rural communities face unique challenges that many larger urban areas do not face, such as small tax bases and extremely limited budgets. Cutting or eliminating FEMA-administered grant programs would place undue constraint on the ability of rural areas to support key emergency management and response functions. If the administration's fiscal year 2018 budget is enacted, how would DHS ensure that adequate levels of public safety, preparedness, and resilience are maintained in rural communities? Please explain.

I urge the Administration to reconsider these short-sighted and harmful cuts and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray
United States Senator