



NARC National Association of Regional Councils

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

DHS APPROPRIATIONS

BUILDING REGIONAL COMMUNITIES – LARGE, SMALL, URBAN AND RURAL – THROUGH ADVOCACY, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

ISSUE

The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) supports \$40.6 billion in funding, \$36.4 billion in discretionary funds, for the FY2008 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations, which represents an increase of \$2.3 billion more than the White House and \$177 million more than H.R. 2638, the House companion bill.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONGRESS

- Support the Senate Department of Homeland Security Appropriations bill version (S. 1644).
- Urge prompt passage for the sustained and increased homeland security dollars to local and regional governments for their necessary implementation of essential regional strategies that promote innovation and sustain the nation's strong posture pre and post-disaster.
- Support increases in key state and local first responder assistance programs, including fire grants, Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPG), Disaster Relief Fund, Pre-Disaster Mitigation and Citizen Corps.

BACKGROUND

Numerous pieces of legislation and billions of dollars have addressed various homeland security and community preparedness issues, especially on the heels of the unanticipated, multiple events that affected the Gulf Coast. A major effort is needed to establish or fund planning on a multi-county basis. Emergency and contingency response plans do not lend themselves to development by a single jurisdiction. Experience has shown that it will take the coordinated efforts of numerous jurisdictions to successfully protect America's cities and counties, and the metropolitan and rural areas of the nation. A network of more than 500 regional councils of government, planning commissions and development districts throughout the country covering more than 35,000 of the 39,000 local governments are readily available to develop strategic assessments and plans for protecting the homeland and assuring communities are prepared for unanticipated events. Emergency response to manmade or natural disasters does not lend itself to a block grant approach. Funding needs to be apportioned to states based on identified potential terrorist targets and on tendency toward natural disasters, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and earthquakes. Many lessons have been learned from the multiple events that have changed and affected the lives of millions of people in communities and regions throughout the nation.

In the aftermath of the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001 and other catastrophic events, the National Association of Regional Councils has either surveyed or been in contact with regional councils of government, planning commissions and development districts to determine their actions to pull together the necessary players to develop a regional emergency response strategy. Many regional councils and metropolitan planning organizations have effectively responded and are still actively engaged in the many and diverse response activities. These responses have been shared with Congress, the Office of Homeland Security and the White house. Some of these activities have been showcased in NARC publications. In 2003, NARC worked with Rep. Jack Kingston (R-GA), who introduced the Regional Comprehensive Emergency Preparedness, Response and Coordination Act of 2003. This effort has been revived and reintroduced for language inclusion in the FY08 DHS authorization bill as a grant program.