



2008 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

HOMELAND SECURITY

ISSUE

The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) supports protecting homeland security and improving preparedness through a regional approach with the inclusion of regional councils (RCs) in coordination, planning and response efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONGRESS

ROLE OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

- Recognize the network of RCs for regional collaboration, maximizing the advanced governance, multi-level partnerships, and formal institutional linkages as most effective in using federal funds to improve emergency preparedness and response.
- Support regional approaches and use of RCs in developing “all hazards” emergency response plans.
- Formalize the federal position on and leverage funding for RCs in emergency preparedness and response similar to that of metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) in transportation planning, implementation and capacity building.
- Incorporate regional planning for emergencies with that of the home care industry for disabled and disadvantaged persons.
- Include representation of RCs on all ten FEMA Regional Advisory Councils and on the FEMA National Advisory Council.

FUNDING

- Support increases in key state and local first responder assistance programs, including fire, Emergency Management Performance (EMPG), Disaster Relief Fund, Pre-Disaster Mitigation, Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) and Citizen Corps.
- Support expansion of the UASI grants, which sets a strategic direction for the enhancement of regional response capability and capacity and is the most effective tool to recognize emergency preparedness and response inter-jurisdictional cooperation.
- Support the inclusion of a grant program for RCs to enhance regional authority and develop and promulgate emergency regional planning and response.
- Create an opportunity to develop regional case studies to demonstrate RC best practices for emergency planning and response.
- Require states to promptly pass-through a percentage of local funding for regional development of security assessments and plans, including upgrades in GIS or other programs or needed equipment, consistent with local and regional needs assessment.
- Provide funding on the basis of identified needs, particularly for critical infrastructure and multi-state regions.

PARTNERSHIPS

- Codify partnerships with stakeholders in government (local, state, and federal) and across multiple policy sectors in formal, enforceable rules and protocols to maximize the utility of federal funds and to establish cooperative plans and understanding.
- Invest in creating multiple public-private partnerships, producing multiple informal coalitions with greater resource capabilities.

BACKGROUND

Inconsistencies in preparedness efforts across state and local governments ultimately yield greater vulnerability to the terror hazard and less effective homeland security policy. For this reason, a major effort is needed to establish or fund planning on a multi-jurisdictional basis. Experience has shown that it takes the coordinated efforts of numerous jurisdictions to successfully protect America’s cities and counties, and the metropolitan and rural regions of the nation. A network of more than 500 regional councils of government (RCs) throughout the country covering more than 35,000 of the 39,000 local governments are readily available to develop strategic assessments and plans for assuring communities are prepared.

Historically, disaster management has been primarily a local and state responsibility. This was true in the aftermaths of September 11, 2001 and other catastrophic events. NARC members were and have continued to be active in developing and implementing comprehensive regional emergency response strategies to protect citizens, communities and regional economies. Many lessons have been learned and best practices developed from RCs and their planning and response to the multiple events that have changed and affected the lives of millions of people in communities and regions throughout the nation.