



## TALKING POINTS HOMELAND SECURITY

**The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC)** supports protecting the homeland and improving emergency preparedness, management and response through the inclusion and expanded authority of regional councils (RCs) in coordination, planning and response efforts with federal, state and local governments, as well as the private sector.

**HISTORICAL EVIDENCE** – Since September 11, 2001, the hurricanes that ravaged the Gulf Coast and the California wildfires, homeland security has played a pivotal role in shaping the activities and policies within public agencies at all levels of government. Both man-made and natural disasters do not stop at city, county or state boundaries and, therefore, it requires regional cooperation to plan, prepare and respond accordingly.

**REGIONAL COUNCIL ROLE** – A national network of more than 500 regional councils of government throughout the U.S., covering more than 35,000 of the 39,000 local governments, are readily available to aid in protecting the homeland to assure communities are prepared for unanticipated events. Regional councils (RCs) have over forty years of accountability and experience in overcoming multi-jurisdictional barriers and preparing and implementing necessary response plans to assist first responders. Regional councils are also uniquely positioned to gather, house and update information needed for local officials to make informed and timely decisions. NARC currently has representation on three FEMA Regional Advisory Councils to highlight and expand the active role of RCs.

**ALL HAZARDS, ALL REGIONS RESPONSE** – Experience has shown that it will take the coordinated efforts of numerous jurisdictions to successfully protect America's cities and counties in metropolitan and rural areas throughout the nation. Therefore, all disaster strategies need to be incorporated into a regional response.

**ADMINISTRATION DOCUMENTATION** – Regional planning and coordination needs to be included into strategies at all levels of government. The 2007 White House "National Homeland Security Strategy" and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's "National Response Framework" includes the impact and need for "regions" and "regional cooperation" due to NARC's diligence.

**FEDERAL FUNDING** – Federal funding needs to be apportioned to states based on identified potential terrorist targets and on tendency toward natural and man-made disasters. Adequate federal funding and increased regional authority are required for the regional development of interoperability, preparedness and response. This includes the establishment of a grant program to provide funding to approved regional councils to develop and promulgate homeland security planning and response on a regional level with federal, state, regional, local and private sector partners.

**REGIONAL CASE STUDIES** – Regional homeland security "case studies" should be made a priority by Congress and the Administration to highlight best practices, methodologies and examples of how regional councils are directly involved in and improve homeland security activities, including small, large, rural and urban RCs, demonstrating the significance of their work in disaster preparedness, management and response.

### **REGIONAL SUCCESSES** –

2004 GAO report: "Particularly since the events of September 11, 2001, regional approaches have been recognized as a key way to address the threat of terrorism... the most effective responses are coordinated and planned across the region, rather than being jurisdiction-specific.... Regional organization structures, flexibility to account for local conditions, and strategic planning are key characteristics of regional coordination. Given the important role that regional planning and governance can play in improving national preparedness, these developments warrant continuing congressional oversight."

Texas Governor Perry on 2005 Hurricanes: "The Governor's 24 Councils of Governments (COGs) are well-organized regions that provide a useful framework for regional planning. COGs should coordinate the development of regional evacuation plans by bringing together hurricane evacuation areas, state agencies, local governments and private stakeholders...Regional response and evacuation plans must be exercised regularly."