



NARC National Association of Regional Councils

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

URBAN AREA SECURITY INITIATIVE

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

ISSUE

The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) supports protecting homeland security and improving preparedness through sustained and increased funding of the Urban Area Security Initiative Grants (UASI), which sets a strategic direction for the enhancement of regional response capability and capacity.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONGRESS

- Continue monitoring and evaluate the shifting security threats in not only the top six urban areas, but all throughout the country, particularly to regions with critical infrastructure and unique characteristics.
- Ensure a group decision-making process when making broad sweeping reforms.
- Maintain an “all hazards” approach, when looking toward and planning for all possible natural and man-made disasters.
- Emphasize a direct incident command and unified command structure.
- Enhance capabilities through planning, equipment, training, and exercises that include all disciplines.
- Create a higher level of response capability for emergency response teams.
- Develop a financing and resourcing strategy for all levels of government.
- Enhance response capabilities of detection and decontamination, mass casualty, and Urban and Rescue teams.
- Enhance response capabilities to respond, detect, and deter, contain, and recover from the effects of a terrorist / Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) incident.
- Sustain funding levels to account for all activities necessary to fulfill UASI grant mission.
- Include regional coordination, planning and response recommendations.

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. 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 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, assuring communities are prepared for unanticipated events.

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.

The Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) is designed to set a strategic direction for the enhancement of regional response capability and capacity. UASI's mission is to reduce area vulnerability and prevent terrorism and/or weapons of mass destruction (WMD) incidents. Through Federal grant funding, UASI is tasked to reduce area vulnerability by strengthening the cycle of response and by ensuring that potential targets are identified, assessed and protected. Additionally UASI Region One is actively developing and maintaining a net of intelligence by which threats to our jurisdiction are discovered and eliminated.