

United States Congress

February 6, 2014

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson,

We write to you today regarding the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) Relative Risk Profile formula for the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI). We appreciate the opportunity to address this issue with you.

In 2007, Congress passed the "9/11 Act" (Public Law 110-53), establishing the UASI grant program, which provides critical funding to ensure the safety of high-risk urban areas. With guidance from Congress, FEMA developed a comprehensive formula to rank the risk of a terror threat in each urban area. When utilizing this formula, FEMA must be certain to accurately assess each city's vulnerability, threat, and consequence of a terrorist attack, but also must rely on data that equally analyzes each city fairly. We believe that the current formula fails to accurately depict certain data points that impact the Consequence Component, including visitor data and determination of Level 1 and Level 2 assets.

Firstly, the Risk Profile considers the average number of visitors as part of its Consequence Components. FEMA does not use federal data to make this assessment of visitor data, but rather utilizes data from a private firm that conducts a survey to determine the average number of visitors on a given day who are staying for up to three days. According to the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA), over the past five years, visitors have stayed in Las Vegas for 4.5 days on average.

This additional 1.5 days length of stay could significantly impact the Consequence Component and the potential impact on lives if there were a terror attack. Therefore, we encourage FEMA to utilize this data when considering visitor volume for the Las Vegas/Paradise Metropolitan Statistical Area. Furthermore, the visitor data for fiscal years 2013 and 2014 both calculate the number of visitors on a single day as 421,154. It is concerning that these statistics fail to account for any change or growth in tourism from year to year. We also ask for a copy of the data purchased from the private vendor used to assess this score expeditiously so that we can analyze their findings within the two week comment period established by law.

Secondly, the Risk Profile considers Level 1 and Level 2 Assets as part of its assessment of both the Vulnerability and Consequence Component. Unfortunately, the Las Vegas strip is "clustered" and considered one asset, despite the fact that there are more than 35 hotels along the Las Vegas strip, many of which have 15,000 occupants at once. We respectfully request that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) consider each critical infrastructure along the Las Vegas strip on its own merit rather than "clustering" the entire area into one asset.

Ensuring that Las Vegas has the resources it needs to combat potential threats is a goal we all share. We appreciate the opportunity to bring these concerns with the formula to your attention and hope that FEMA will take into consideration the unique challenges that Las Vegas as a premier tourist destination poses in the ongoing changes to prevent terror attacks in the United States.

Thank you again for the opportunity to write to you today. We look forward to your response to this inquiry by February 10, 2014.

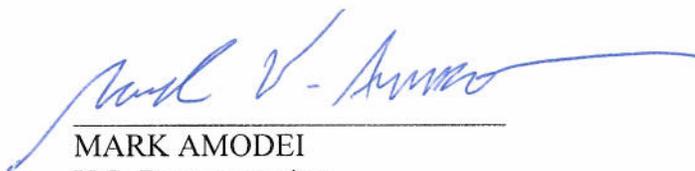
Sincerely,



DEAN HELLER
U.S. Senator



JOE HECK
U.S. Representative



MARK AMODEI
U.S. Representative