

**Opening Statement**  
**Ranking Member Donna Edwards**  
**Markup of H.R. XXXX – *Natural Hazards Risk Reduction Act***  
**November 15, 2010**

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Thank you, Chairman Quayle, for holding today's markup to reauthorize two important programs, the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program—or NEHRP and the National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program—or NWIRP.

The reauthorization of these programs is very timely as there have been a record number of declared Federal disasters in the U.S. this year, resulting in economic damage exceeding \$45 billion. It is already the deadliest year for tornadoes in the U.S. since 1936, with 550 fatalities so far. The images of devastation from our colleague Congresswoman Sewell's district in Alabama and those of an almost completely flattened Joplin, Missouri were nothing less than heartbreaking.

The best way to minimize the loss of lives and property caused by natural disasters, as well as reduce disruptions to our economy, is to create communities that are disaster resilient. NEHRP and NWIRP support research and development programs to better understand earthquakes and windstorms and their impact, and to improve the resiliency of buildings and critical lifelines. This work has led to advancements in monitoring and building practices, and has increased awareness and preparation by the public.

Today's Committee Print makes a number of important improvements to these programs, including establishing NIST as the lead agency for both NEHRP and NWIRP and placing the responsibility for interagency coordination in the hands of agency directors who have the authority to make both budgetary and programmatic decisions. I am pleased that we were also able to work together over the last week on additional changes that we will consider as part of the Manager's Amendment.

Despite this and my strong support for the reauthorization of these programs, I do have some concerns with the Committee Print that we are considering today. First, even though these programs have proven track records in bolstering the resiliency of our communities and reducing the cost associated with natural hazards, and despite the fact that experts have expressed concern that insufficient funding has negatively impacted the implementation of these programs and contributed to the loss of low-cost mitigation opportunities, the Committee Print cuts the funding authorization for these programs and then freezes funding over the authorization period. When we consider the devastating losses that have plagued the U.S. this year and the potential costs associated with a large-scale disaster like the earthquake in Japan, this course of action seems irresponsible.

I urge my colleagues to consider the long-term savings these programs will provide. Studies of FEMA's pre-disaster mitigation program have shown that for every dollar we invest in mitigation activities, we save \$3 to \$4 dollars in recovery costs. We can, and should, be doing more to help our communities be prepared so we can realize these cost savings.

In addition, despite your attempts to clarify authorization protocols, confusion remains. Not only is it increasingly difficult for my Democratic colleagues to understand what the rules of the road are at any given moment or how to craft amendments that comply with them, I believe that the uncertainty is resulting in bad policy. In this case, we have a combination of seemingly arbitrary numbers that seem to be justified only by an effort to comply with an absurd protocol and not on any real-world need.

I also want to take a moment to talk about a disturbing trend that seems to be emerging. On bills which have traditionally enjoyed bipartisan support, there has been a startling lack of outreach by the Majority prior to markup. To be fair, the Majority did ask for our input on today's Committee Print, but only because the previously-scheduled markup was postponed due to factors not within the control of the Majority. Had this markup proceeded as originally scheduled, we would not have been provided an opportunity for input.

In the last Congress, the markup of the previous iteration of this bill was preceded by weeks, and perhaps months, of outreach to and negotiation with the Minority. As a result, we actively incorporated Republican ideas and legislative priorities into the bill, and Ranking Member Smith agreed to be an original co-sponsor. That bill ultimately passed the House by a vote of 335-50. This was a great example of bipartisan legislating, and it was a better bill as a result of the process. Bipartisanship takes work, and it takes a willingness to compromise that has been noticeably lacking by the Majority this Congress.

I sincerely hope that the members of this subcommittee can move forward in a productive and bipartisan manner in the future, particularly on issues such as these which have historically benefitted from bipartisan support. That's what produces good policy, and that's what our constituents want us to do.

Thank you. I yield back the balance of my time.