

THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2008

HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE VOTES OUT FEMA NOMINEE

WASHINGTON – The Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Thursday reported out the nomination of Vice Admiral Harvey Johnson to be Deputy Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

At a business meeting, the Committee also approved several pieces of legislation, including a plan to add controls for the use of government credit cards by federal employees and the reauthorization of the U.S. Fire Administration, which supports fire fighters in communities across the nation. The Committee also reported out the Federal Food Donation Act of 2007, S. 2420, which would encourage contractors providing more than \$25,000 worth of food to federal agencies to donate the leftover food to the needy.

Johnson was approved by a vote of 9-0.

“Vice Admiral Johnson has been and will continue to be an essential figure in FEMA’s continuing growth,” said Committee Chairman Joe Lieberman, ID-Conn. “The agency still faces many challenges, but Admiral Johnson has the background and leadership skills necessary to make the necessary changes. He is committed to continuing his work to integrate preparedness functions into FEMA and strengthening FEMA’s regional offices, and I support his nomination.”

Ranking Member Susan Collins, R-Me., said: “The Committee’s investigation into Hurricane Katrina found the FEMA lacked many things, perhaps most notably, qualified leadership. Admiral Johnson is a qualified leader who possesses systematic management skills to deal with a host of difficult issues,

including logistics and contracting. He has an impressive track record in the position for which he has been nominated, and he has taken significant steps in putting FEMA on the path to fixing the problems previously identified by this Committee. I support his nomination.”

The Committee accepted by voice vote the Government Credit Card Abuse Act of 2007, S. 789, which would require new government-wide management controls on purchase and travel cards. The bill requires specific internal controls at the agency level to ensure that purchase cards – which are government credit cards used for procurements – and travel cards issued to federal employees to use for travel-related expenses are used only for approved spending. Agencies would be required to take appropriate personnel actions for misuse of cards and credit checks must be made before an employee may obtain a travel card.

On a voice vote, the Committee unanimously approved the U.S. Fire Administration Reauthorization Act of 2008, S.2606, which provides appropriations through Fiscal Year 2012, reauthorizes the National Fire Academy with updated language to increase focus on areas where wild lands meet urban development, and authorizes contracting for training programs.

Other legislation reported out of the Committee:

- S. 2291, the Plain Language in Government Communications Act of 2007, which was introduced by Senator Akaka and would require federal documents describing a program, benefit, or service to be written in plain language.
- H.R. 3247, the Hurricanes Katrina and Rita Recovery Facilitation Act of 2007, which was amended by a substitute from Senator Mary Landrieu, D-La., that contained a series of changes to Stafford Act programs that will apply retroactively only to the ongoing recovery efforts from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.
- H.R. 3179, the Local Preparedness Acquisition Act, which would allow state and local governments to purchase law enforcement and security equipment from commercial vendors listed on General Services Administration Schedule 84.
- S. Res. 497, which expresses the sense of the Senate that public servants should be commended for their dedication to continued service to the nation during Public Servant Recognition Week May 5-11. 2008.
- H.R. 5551 which would raise the hourly compensation for attorneys appointed to represent indigent criminal defendants in the D.C. Superior Court and the D.C. Court of Appeals from \$65 per hour to \$80 per hour.

The Committee also approved 17 post office naming bills.

