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# GAO ASSESSES FEMA'S POST- KATRINA REINVENTION

WASHINGTON – Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Chairman Joe Lieberman, ID-Conn., Monday welcomed a new assessment of progress implementing reforms to reinvent FEMA into an agency capable of responding to a catastrophe the size of Hurricane Katrina.

The 127-page report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) examined the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) implementation of the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006, authored by Lieberman and Committee Ranking Member Susan Collins, R-Me. The report found that while FEMA and DHS had taken action to implement most of the reforms required by the law, work remains before the law is fully implemented.

"I am pleased the Department has made substantial headway in implementing the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act, which contained provisions to strengthen FEMA and transform it for the first time in its history into an agency capable of responding to a disaster the magnitude of Hurricane Katrina," Lieberman said. "In particular, FEMA should be commended for strengthening its regional offices and for making changes to improve logistics for the timely delivery of goods and services – actions which clearly contributed to FEMA's much improved response to this year's hurricane season.

"As expected, however, the agency will require an extended period of time to fully implement the reforms. It still has a lot of work ahead of it, particularly in the areas of developing recovery strategies and establishing a strong surge workforce needed to respond to catastrophic disasters. I look forward to working with the incoming Administration to achieve these goals and to keep FEMA moving in the right direction."

The Post-Katrina Act contained over 300 provisions that require DHS or FEMA action.

The GAO report found that FEMA had implemented the organizational changes required by the Act such as elevating FEMA's Administrator to be principal advisor to the President and the Secretary of Homeland Security on emergency management and reuniting preparedness functions with response functions, including giving FEMA responsibility for allocating and managing grant money to help state and local officials and first responders prepare for terrorist attacks and natural disasters.

The report additionally found that while work remains, FEMA had taken action in the following areas: strengthening regional offices; improving logistics to ensure timely delivery of goods and services; improving contracting and information technology systems; providing assistance to disaster-affected areas and populations; improving preparedness; and preventing waste, fraud, and abuse.

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