Testimony of Jerome M. Hauer
Before the House Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure

An Independent FEMA:A Step Towards rebuilding Federal Emergency Management Capabilities

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee thank you for the invitation to testify before you today. I am here to discuss your proposed legislation to make FEMA an independent agency once again and remove it from the Department of homeland Security. My comments will be brief.

As you can see from my Biography, I have worked in Emergency Management and public Safety at the Federal, State and local level under two Mayors, seven years under Senator, then Governor Evan Bayh and a President. I also ran Emergency Response programs for IBM worldwide. I've seen FEMA in it's Heyday and at it's worst. My concern today is that as you move forward with this legislation, which I fully support, that you don't cripple it once again.

While I am in complete agreement with you that the agency needs to be freestanding I would urge you to ensue that if this were to occur that a transition group be put in place to give FEMA the support it needs to allow it to do it's job during this transition. Or it will fail should disaster strike.

I am also concerned about your desire to split the terrorism response coordination function out of FEMA. Emergency Management is Emergency Management no matter what the issue is. When we do get hit by another terrorist attack on our soil we need to have one agency not two coordinating the Federal Response. Let the Department of Homeland Security perform it's mission of securing our borders, our transportation systems and our infrastructure. Let them give out UASI grants but let FEMA coordinate the Emergency Management Program Grants, The structure you are proposing will lead to confusion and agency infighting.
We will return to the days when FEMA walked away from the mission of terrorism preparedness and response.

I remember getting a call from Attorney General Janet Reno asking if I could help her in trying to convince the FEMA Director to play in the first

TOPOFF exercise. FEMA had decided they did not want to be involved in the exercise.

My point is that there needs to be one coordinating agency reporting to the president that handles works with all Federal agencies to manage any type of disaster be it man-made or natural.

The second thing that you need to do is to give the new Administrator the ability to get rid of the political hacks that burrowed in at FEMA. Assuming Craig Fugate is confirmed, he will need a strong team around him and not be saddled with people who are now SES and feel immune from repercussions to undermine a new Administrator.
I said I would be brief and I have been.

Thank you again for inviting me here today.