

A legacy of regional cooperation, a commitment to a vibrant future

May 7, 2007

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Manassas Park

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**Adjunct member*

The Honorable Michael Chertoff
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Chertoff:

I am writing on behalf of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) Chief Administrative Officers Committee to urge that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) carefully consider the threats, vulnerabilities and consequences uniquely associated with the National Capital Region as DHS evaluates and approves funding levels for the FY 2007 Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grants.

COG is the association of 21 local governments in the National Capital Region and the Chief Administrative Officers Committee is comprised of city and county managers for each of these governments. Area local governments working through COG and in partnership with the State of Maryland, the Commonwealth of Virginia, the District of Columbia and many other federal agencies have measurably enhanced emergency preparedness and response capabilities since the attacks of September 11, 2001. The federal UASI grant program has been an invaluable resource, although we have long recognized that the vast majority of public safety and homeland security investments have come from local rather than federal resources.

COG applauds DHS for moving toward a more quantifiable, less subjective evaluation and ranking of UASI applications. The Chief Administrative Officers Committee also appreciated a recent briefing by top DHS officials on its UASI risk methodology and value assignment. Area local governments remained concerned, however, about the components of the vulnerability and consequence element, which may not adequately reflect the risks and consequences of a terrorist attack or other emergency in the National Capital Region. As we understand it, 20 percent of the risk formula is a DHS assessment of threat and 80 percent is an assessment of vulnerability and consequences using four indices: population, economic, infrastructure and national security.

The DHS evaluation and ranking may not adequately acknowledge that the National Capital Region's population and its Gross Regional Product, which combined are three-quarters of the vulnerability and consequence element, have significance beyond its ranking relative to other top regions in the United States. The DHS ranking, which is heavily weighted to population and a narrow view of economic strength, will result in the National Capital Region consistently trailing the New York, Los Angeles and Chicago metropolitan regions.

We are not, however, just a region with a population of more than 4.5 million and a diverse, vibrant economy. We are, have been and will continue to be the seat of the Federal government. Among the 4.5 million residents are hundreds of top federal officials including the President, his Cabinet and Members of Congress. And while our Gross Regional Product is impressive, the risk formula does not appear to fully acknowledge that the federal government is the National Capital Region's single largest employer with a proposed FY 2008 budget of \$2.9 trillion. The consequences of any disruption in day-to-day federal activities or the symbolic role of the federal government in the National Capital Region may not be adequately captured by the proposed indices. We believe this recognition is shared by most Americans and public officials.

Area local governments understand full well the tough decisions concerning FY 2007 UASI grants and that DHS will be confronted with more documented needs than resources. Local governments face this challenge, as well. We ask that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security augment its risk assessment process and resource allocation with a stronger recognition of the unique and not easily measured inter-relationship between the Federal government and the National Capital Region.

Sincerely,



Anthony H. Griffin

County Executive, Fairfax County

Chairman, Chief Administrative Officers Committee

Cc: Chief Administrative Officers Committee
Senior Policy Group
Director, DHS Office of National Capital Region Coordination