



July 3, 2007

To the Editor:

In the National Capital Region, the federal dollars allocated for homeland security projects have been spent wisely, well and in a timely fashion. Ours is the good news behind the story "States' post-9/11 grants unspent," *USA Today*, June 26.

However, articles like this obscure this fact and hide the truth. The story states that 37.7% of the homeland security grants awarded to Washington, D.C. are unspent; this is not true.

Under the category of "DC," this article mixes state funds received by the District of Columbia, grant awards to non-governmental entities and regional urban area funds received for use in the National Capital Region (NCR); this is misleading when compared with state funding received across the country.

Of the funds that the Department of Homeland Security reported unspent, 28% have been awarded so recently that there is not yet authority to draw down the funds, and only 8% of the total funding is actually unspent according to DHS definitions, but this is not a problem since there is time left in their period of performance and they needn't be spent until 2008.

Money is not considered to be spent until the contracted goods or services are received — even though money may have been obligated. For some projects, such as technical solutions for interoperability or the construction of operations centers, detailed planning is required before money can even be obligated.

Localities and states which have to front their own funds before being reimbursed by DHS are well aware of this convoluted process, since it is our monies, funding that is needed for public safety, education and social services, that are being used as placeholders until the federal funds are received.

Since 9/11, the NCR has received about \$200 million under the Urban Areas Security Initiative program. All of the money has either been spent on key regional priorities or obligated within the required time frame.

The NCR faces unique homeland security preparedness challenges because the nation's capital and the center of our federal government reside within its boundaries. A direct terrorist attack or natural disaster could produce catastrophic losses in terms of human casualties and political and economic damage, in addition to profound damage to public morale and confidence.

The funding from DHS has helped us develop the plans and systems that will protect the region, and we're grateful for these grants which have allowed us to strengthen our capabilities to manage homeland security risks.

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But let's keep the record straight - the government, business and nonprofit group officials who have done the planning and research to achieve this record and who will continue to work diligently to ensure this region is secure, deserve no less.



Gerald E. Connolly
Chairman
National Capital Region Emergency Preparedness Council

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