United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 4, 2015

The Honorable W. Craig Fugate
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Administrator Fugate:

In March, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) released its State Mitigation Plan Review Guide with a new requirement for States to address climate change before the state becomes eligible for receipt of disaster mitigation grants. As you know, disaster mitigation grants are awarded to State and local governments after a Presidential major disaster declaration. These funds are crucial in helping disaster-stricken communities prepare for future emergencies.

After tornadoes, floods, and hurricanes, disaster mitigation funds are used in a variety of ways to reduce the risk associated with natural disasters on people and property. These funds have been used in our states to construct safe rooms, retrofit buildings and facilities to better withstand the force of tornado or hurricane strength winds, and elevate homes or relocate and demolish structures that have been flooded.

From FY2010 through FY2014, FEMA obligated more than $1.4 billion under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program alone. Including, $52.6 million for Oklahoma, more than $1 billion for Louisiana, over $112 million for Alabama, over $37 million for Nebraska and over $239 million for Mississippi during that time.

The scientific debate around the role of climate change, its causes and projected impacts is ongoing. As climate research continues to develop, limitations in the overall understanding of climate and the limits of scientific research have become increasingly evident. In early April, the American Physical Society (APS) adjusted its stance on climate change from a 2007 statement where the evidence of "global warming" was "incontrovertible"[1] to its current statement that "climate change" is a "critical issue" followed by an admission of remaining challenges the scientific community faces relative to observing, interpreting and projecting climate changes.[2]

---

[1] American Physical Society, 2007 APS Climate Change Statement (November 2007), available at: http://www.aps.org/policy/statements/07_1.cfm.

[2] Vaidyanathan, G., *Science: Semantic battle among physicists forces a restatement of their stance on climate change* (April 14, 2015), ClimateWire, E&E News, available at: http://www.eenews.net/climatewire/stories/1060016675.

This shift in tone from APS is reflective of an admission by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) of the growing discrepancy between climate model predictions and actual observations. One example includes the admission in its 2013 Report that "Almost all historical simulations do not reproduce the observed recent warming hiatus" and further explained that the source of such a discrepancy could be caused by "combinations of internal climate variability, missing or incorrect radiative forcing, and model response error."[3]

When it comes to the relationship between climate change and extreme weather events, there are similar limits to the scientific understanding and there remains to be any indication or trend to show there have been increases in their occurrence or intensity. In the same 2013 Fifth Assessment Report, the IPCC concluded that "[c]urrent data sets indicate no significant observed trends in global tropical cyclone frequency over the past century. . . . No robust trends in annual numbers of tropical storms, hurricanes and major hurricanes counts have been identified over the past 100 years in the North Atlantic basin."[4] When it comes to droughts, the Fifth Assessment report indicated that previous "conclusions regarding global increasing trend in drought since the 1970s were probably overstated." [5]

Despite a broader shift in the tenor of discussions around climate change and significant amount of research on natural climate change and the benefits of increased CO_2 that are largely ignored, the Obama Administration maintains steadfast commitment to an extreme and economically damaging climate agenda irrespective of the gaps in the scientific understanding around climate change. Those of us willing to point out discrepancies, ask questions or raise legitimate concerns are met with a barrage of patronizing arrogance from the pseudo-academic and environmental elite intended to muzzle the slightest notion of skepticism or dissent.

We are concerned FEMA's recent decision to require States to address climate change in their mitigation strategies injects unnecessary, ideological-based red tape into the disaster preparedness process. Planning and preparing for disasters should be focused on strengthening and protecting local communities from inevitable weather events and not about falling in line with the President's political agenda.

Accordingly, please answer the below questions and submit a response to the Committee on Environment and Public Works no later than May 15, 2015.

1. Please provide the specific statutory authority the agency relied upon to require consideration of climate change as a requisite for receipt of preparedness funds.

2. Page 13 of the State Mitigation Plan Review Guide, includes the following statement:

---

[3] IPCC, *2013: Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis*. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA, 1535 pp.
[4] *Id.*
[5] *Id.*

"The challenges posed by climate change, such as more intense storms, frequent heavy precipitation, heat waves, drought, extreme flooding, and higher sea levels, could significantly alter the types and magnitudes of hazards impacting states in the future."

a. Please identify the "types and magnitudes of hazards" the agency is referring and provide specific data, analyses and other pertinent information relied upon to support this conclusion.

3. In a 2012 press briefing on the subject of hurricanes, you made a statement that hurricanes follow a cycle and that over decades of time, you have observed "decades of increased activity and decreased activity."

   a. Do you still agree with this statement?

   b. Have you developed an understanding of the causes for this cycle? If so, please provide data, analyses and other pertinent information relied upon to support your conclusion.

4. On Page 13 of the State Mitigation Plan Review Guide, includes the following statement:

   "Due to the inherent uncertainties with projections of future hazard events, states are expected to look across the whole community of partners (for example, public, private, academic, non-governmental, etc.) to identify the most relevant data and select the most appropriate methodologies to assess risks and vulnerability."

   a. Please provide the criteria by which states are expected to measure, quantify and plan for hazard events given the "inherent uncertainties" with projections.

   b. What amount of state resources does FEMA estimate for compliance with the new requirement?

   c. Please provide a list of Governors and/or other state officials FEMA consulted to develop the new criteria.

5. If a state is not granted disaster preparedness funding for failure to meet the new criteria, please list the appropriate avenues of recourse.

We look forward to your prompt and thorough response to these questions. Should your staff have any questions regarding this request, contact the Committee on Environment and Public Works at (202) 224-6176.

Sincerely,

James M. Inhofe
Chairman

David Vitter
United States Senator

John Barrasso
United States Senator

Thad Cochran
United States Senator

Deb Fischer
United States Senator

Bill Cassidy, M.D.
Bill Cassidy
United States Senator

James Lankford
United States Senator