

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 7, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary
U.S. Department Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Noem:

We write to you today with the utmost concern about the Trump administration's reported plan to eliminate the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and urge you not to follow through with this unlawful plan.¹

FEMA is the only Federal agency with the sole responsibility for helping communities across the country before, during, and after disasters. We are alarmed about the mounting reports of FEMA being dismantled and the ongoing steps the Agency is taking to fire employees and take funding from disaster recovery and preparedness grants that improve communities across the Nation.² Reportedly, you are planning to destroy FEMA's 46-year history behind closed doors, while threatening to retaliate against those who expose your actions.³

During your January 17 confirmation hearing before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, you stated, "As Secretary I will enhance our emergency preparedness and strengthen FEMA's capabilities."⁴ Since then, your actions have consistently undermined FEMA and its mission, contrary to your sworn testimony. Only two months after your sworn testimony, you declared during a televised Cabinet meeting on March 24, "We're going to eliminate FEMA."⁵

The Trump administration's plan to dismantle FEMA will make Americans less safe. Congress, in collaboration with stakeholders and informed by the lessons learned from large-scale disasters and emergencies like Hurricanes Andrew, Katrina, Sandy, and Maria, and the 9/11 terrorist attacks, has built a framework from which FEMA operates critical programs that serve as a lifeline to communities after disasters and emergencies. Any attempt by the Trump administration to dismantle FEMA will erode Federal capabilities; leave States, locals, Tribes, and territories vulnerable; and cause imminent danger to Americans, especially as we approach hurricane season.

¹ Gabe Cohen, *'We're not preparing': As Trump officials vow to eliminate FEMA, the agency is already in turmoil*, CNN (Mar. 26, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/03/26/politics/fema-payments-staffing-stalled-turmoil/index.html>.

² *Id.*

³ Thomas Frank, *FEMA chief given lie detector test after leak of private meeting*, POLITICO (Apr. 4, 2025), <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/04/04/fema-chief-given-lie-detector-test-after-leak-of-private-meeting-politico-00272302>.

⁴ *Nomination of the Honorable Kristi Noem to be Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security: Hearing Before the S. Comm. on Homeland Sec. & Gov't Affs.*, 119th Cong. (2025) (statement of Gov. Kristi Noem, Gov. of S.D.), <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/Prepared-Statement-Noem-2025-01-17-REVISED.pdf>.

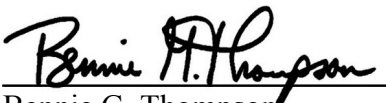
⁵ Thomas Frank, *FEMA halts grant program that spent billions on disaster protection*, E&E NEWS (Apr. 4, 2025), <https://www.eenews.net/articles/fema-halts-grant-program-that-spent-billions-on-disaster-protection/>.

Further, your actions as Secretary have been hostile to the FEMA workforce and the States, locals, Tribes, and territories that the Agency supports through congressionally mandated programs. Hundreds of FEMA staff have been fired with more expected, which would decimate the Agency.⁶ These firings are occurring against the backdrop of an already strained workforce, as FEMA continues to face longstanding staffing shortages in the face of increasingly severe weather.⁷

FEMA has also unlawfully withheld critical, congressionally appropriated grant funding from local communities. On January 27, the Acting Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a memorandum instructing Federal agencies to halt the obligation and disbursement of Federal financial assistance that benefits millions of Americans.⁸ Federal courts intervened and issued temporary restraining orders against the funding freeze. On February 28, a coalition of State attorneys general filed a motion alleging that despite court orders, FEMA persisted in blocking grant program funding, including funding for wildfire prevention, flood mitigation, and disaster preparedness.⁹ On March 6, U.S. District Court Judge John J. McConnell, Jr., issued a ruling reinforcing his previous orders to block the Trump administration's freeze on Federal funding.¹⁰ On April 4, Judge McConnell found that FEMA was continuing to violate the court's orders and ordered FEMA to comply immediately.¹¹

Your actions with respect to FEMA are contrary to your own sworn testimony, and you are putting lives at risk and hurting our Nation's ability to respond to disasters and other emergencies. Therefore, we urge you to immediately cease all discussions or policy changes that would result or effectuate the elimination or weakening of FEMA. We also urge you to immediately comply with court orders and release all grant funds owed by FEMA to States, locals, Tribes, and territories.

Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress
Ranking Member, Committee
on Homeland Security



Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress
Ranking Member, Committee
on Appropriations

⁶ Betsy Klein, et al., *DOGE expected to take aim at DHS with staffing cuts, including at US Secret Service*, CNN (Apr. 5, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/04/05/politics/doge-dhs-secret-service/index.html>.

⁷ U.S. Gov't Accountability Off., *GAO-23-105663, FEMA Disaster Workforce: Actions Needed to Improve Hiring Data and Address Staffing Gaps* (2023), <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-105663>.

⁸ *Read the Memo Pausing Federal Grants and Loans*, N.Y. TIMES (Jan. 27, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/01/27/us/omb-memo.html>.

⁹ Second Motion to Enforce the Court's January 31, 2025 Temporary Restraining Order, *State of New York v. Donald Trump*, No. 1:25-cv-00039 (D.R.I. Feb. 28, 2025), <https://www.rid.uscourts.gov/sites/rid/files/motiontoenforce2.pdf>.

¹⁰ Memorandum and Order, *State of New York v. Donald Trump*, No. 1:25-cv-00039 (D.R.I. Mar. 6, 2025), <https://www.rid.uscourts.gov/sites/rid/files/16112325032NYT.pdf>.

¹¹ Zach Schonfeld, *Judge finds FEMA withholding grants in violation of court order*, THE HILL (Apr. 4, 2025), <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5232494-judge-fema-grants-trump-blue-states/>.



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