

AAEM Washington Legislative Visit Overview March 8 – 12, 2009

The 2008-2009 AAEM Legislative Committee Members

The following individuals volunteered to serve on the AAEM Legislative Committee:

Mike Evans, Mobile County EMA – Legislative Chair
Max Armstrong, Blount County EMA – Legislative Co-Chair
Roy Waite, Clarke County EMA
Eric Jones, Elmore County EMA – Board Liaison
Kelly Allen, Cullman County EMA
Johnny Langley, Lee County EMA
Ricky Little, Alabama EMA
Sandra Lucas, External Affairs Alabama EMA

The AAEM Legislative Committee held several conference calls as well as met at the ACCA Winter Conference in December 2008 and the AAEM Winter Conference in Tuscaloosa in January 2009.

Pre-Trip Planning

Nov. 5, 2008: A meeting was held at Alabama EMA in Clanton to select the dates of the 2009 AAEM Legislative trip. The meeting was attended by Mike Evans AAEM Legislative Chair, Max Armstrong AAEM Legislative Co-Chair, Sandra Lucas AEMA, and Sonny Brasfield ACCA. The first topic of discussion was regarding the possible dates for the AAEM Legislative trip. We discussed the dates of the NEMA Conference being March 6-10 and the NACO conference being March 7-11.

We determined that the dates for the 2009 AAEM Legislative Trip would be:

March 8 thru March 12, 2009

- Sunday March 8 – Travel to DC
- Monday March 9 – Determine who to meet with (FEMA, NWS, DHS, etc.)
- Tuesday March 10 – Meet with Legislators
- Wednesday March 11 – Meet with Legislators
- Thursday March 12 – Travel home

Dec. 19, 2008: The AAEM Board and Legislative committee held a Conference Call to finalize who would attend the trip and select a hotel.

The Following Individuals were selected for the trip:

Ellen Haynes, President	Dan Long, President-Elect	Eddie Hicks, Former President
Mike Evans, Legislative Chair	Roy Waite, Legislative Committee Mem.	Ronnie Adair, Area 1 Director
Kristi Stamnes, Area 2 Director	Eric Jones, Area 4 Director	Phyllis Little, Area 6 Director
Sandra Lucas, Ext. Affairs, AEMA		

Roy Waite presented a selection of hotels in the greater DC area with all the details for each one along with pro's and con's. After evaluating the information presented by Roy we selected the Marriot Residence Inn Arlington in Pentagon City.

2009 Legislative Trip Overview

Sunday, March 8: The majority of the group traveled to DC; however a few were already there attending NACo and NEMA functions.

Monday, March 9: At 9:00 AM the team met in a conference room in the hotel to go over the Legislative packet and schedule for the next three days. At 1:00 PM the team visited FEMA Headquarters to see the new National Emergency Simulation Center (NESC). Meldon Hollis at FEMA served as the liaison for the group and set up the tour and briefing that we received from the NESC staff. We received a comprehensive overview of how the center operates and how they can change 1 or 2 planning factors and show how it affects the outcome of the simulation. We saw a functional first-class center and it was obvious that FEMA is excited about the service that it will provide to enhance exercise play and results. Meldon also took us on a bonus tour of the FEMA's National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) that is set up and functions like an EOC. We also had the opportunity to visit and have our picture taken in the NRCC Executive Conference Room where the Executive briefings are conducted located next to the operations center. That night the group had a dinner meeting with Dr. Joe Ferko of EMS Innovations at the Charthouse in Alexandria, Virginia.

Tuesday & Wednesday, March 10 & 11: Two teams conducted scheduled Legislative visits. The following is a brief overview of the results. For more background information view AAEM Legislative Chair, Mike Evans trip schedule and talking points as attachment 1 and 2 of this document. More specific information will be sent to each office in the coming days and weeks.

March 10:

Congressman Bright: Group 2 met with Congressman Bright, He was supportive of EM, willing to help and interested in the issues dealing with EMPG. He wanted to know more about how these issues directly affect Alabama. He also brought up the subject of FEMA and DHS and stated that he thought they ought to be separated.

Senator Shelby: Group 2 met with his Legislative Director and presented our talking points and issues.

Congressman Aderholt: Group 1 met with Congressman Aderholt, he was interested in EMPG and the issues with DHS and FEMA. He seemed to want to know more about how he could help.

Senator Sessions: Group 2 met with his Homeland Security and Military advisor. They asked pertinent questions and displayed a high level of interest in our EMPG issue.

Congressman Davis: Group 2 met with Congressman Davis and he was interested in EMPG and other issues. He also agreed that there needed to be changes in the FEMA declaration process for IA. He himself mentioned the FEMA and DHS issue will be a big issue.

March 11:

On Wednesday morning, AAEM members along with Brock Long attended the Alabama Congressional Delegate's Breakfast at 8 a.m. This breakfast was sponsored by ACCA and held in the new Capitol Visitor's Center located at the back of the Capitol Building.

Congressman Griffith: Group 2 with Eddie Hicks met with the Legislative Director and there was interest in EMPG, and the FEMA/DHS connection. She had a lot of experience in Hurricane response and also had a lot of interest in fixing problems with inadequate response.

Congressman Bachus: Group 1 met with his Chief of Staff and other staffers. There was interest in issues and the staff has a keen understanding of EM issues. Group 1 felt it was an excellent meeting.

Congressman Bonner: Group 2 met with Congressman Bonner and he was interested in our issues and he took several notes. EMPG and FEMA/DHS were the major issues. He is on a committee with jurisdiction over the NWS so he wanted us to keep him apprised of any problems.

Congressman Rogers: Group 1 met with Congressman Roger and he is supportive of EMPG issues. He is against pulling FEMA out of DHS. He wanted to know 3 issues that he could fix with the DHS/FEMA issue. He also asked several questions about the membership count and the history of AAEM.

Wednesday March 11 – Hot-wash:

A hot-wash was held on Wednesday March 11 at 4:00 pm at the hotel after all of the meetings were complete. A list of lessons learned was developed to implement for next year's legislative trip.

Lessons Learned:

1. Tailor each package specifically to the official, taking into account: the committees or subcommittees the legislator serves on, past interest-questions from previous visits, the issues specific from his/her area.
2. Include in each package a brief history of AAEM to include a membership count.
3. Be very specific with talking points.
4. Limit talking points to 3 to 5 and be concise and clear, and as brief as possible.
5. Be sure to write thank you notes to include follow up points. Each lead spokesperson should do this for the legislator in which they lead the meeting.
6. Find out which counties have a lobbyist? Who are they? Touch base with Martha Braddock with IAEM to get up to date on the current issues. Make sure that lobbyist knows the AAEM issues.
7. The talking point books that Mike put together are helpful tools for staff. We might consider an AAEM pocket card for the members. It makes for a nice quick reference with just the main points.
8. In the evening it would be good to coordinate with the staff and meet with them for dinner or social hour. This gives us an opportunity to build some relationships; we all understand why that is important.
9. Scheduling is always a challenge. It might be a good idea to have Senate Day and a House Day. That saves steps and allows for meetings to be scheduled closer together.
10. A hot-wash each evening would be helpful to share what was learned and adjust accordingly.
11. Orientation tours or meetings with different functions of the Government would increase understanding (for example: GAO, CBO, CRS).
12. Brief of the legislative status prior to meeting with members to include, committee review, positions on issues of interest and any other information that may be pertinent. Mike did an excellent job of compiling much of this information, but reviewing the members issues would ensure we all understand their positions prior to meeting.

Next AAEM Legislative Meeting:

The next AAEM Legislative Committee meeting will be held during the summer conference in Mobile on Monday June 15 at 10:30 am. All legislative committee members who are coming to the Summer Conference please plan to attend. We will discuss the year, and review the two main topics: overview of the DC Trip and the status of Disaster Reimbursement Legislation (HB 274 and SB 160).

ATTACHMENT 1

2009 AAEM Legislative DC Trip Schedule

Sunday, March 8th - Thursday, March 12th, 2009

REV 3/11/09 @ 4:00 PM

Day	Time	Office	Location	Attendees	Lead
Sunday	TRAVEL				
Monday	9:00 AM	Planning Meeting	TBD In Hotel	ALL	ME, EH
Monday	1:00 PM	NESC Visit (FEMA HQs)	500 C Street SW	ALL	ME
Monday	6:30 PM	Dinner w/ Dr. Joe Ferko	Charthouse Rest. Old Town	ALL	
Tuesday	10:00 AM	Bright D-2	1205 Longworth HOB	ME, RA, RW, KS, EJ	EJ, KS
Tuesday	11:00 AM	Shelby AL-North (Greg Polley)	304 Russell SOB	ME, RA, RW, KS, EJ	RA, RW
Tuesday	12:00 PM	Davis D-7	208 Cannon HOB	ME, RA, RW, KS, EJ	RW, EH
Tuesday	12:00 PM	Aderholt D-4	1433 Longworth HOB	EH, ED, DL, PL, SL,	PL, ED
Tuesday	2:30 PM	Sessions AL-South	335 Russell SOB	ME, RA, RW, KS, EJ	RA, RW
Wednesday	8:00 AM	Alabama Delegate Breakfast	Capitol Visitor Ctr. Rm.	ALL	EH
Wednesday	10:00 AM	Griffith D-5	417 Cannon HOB	ED, ME, RA, RW, KS, EJ	ED, EJ
Wednesday	11:00 AM	Bachus D-6 (Michael Staley)	2246 Rayburn HOB	EH, DL, PL, SL	EH, DL
Wednesday	11:30 AM	Bonner D-1	2236 Rayburn HOB	ME, RA, RW, KS, EJ	ME, RW
Wednesday	2:30 PM	Rogers D-3	324 Cannon HOB	EH, ED, DL, PL, SL,	DL, EH
Wednesday	4:00 PM	Trip Hot-wash Meeting	Hotel	ALL	EH
Thursday	TRAVEL				

NAME	CODE	NAME	CODE
Ellen Haynes	EH	Phyllis Little	PL
Dan Long	DL	Eric Jones	EJ
Eddie Hicks	ED	Sandra Lucas	SL
Mike Evans	ME		
Roy Waite	RW	Brock Long	BL
Ronnie Adair	RA	Sonny Brasfield	SB
Kristi Stamnes	KS	ANYONE AVAILABLE	AA

TEAM 1

Ellen Haynes
Eddie Hicks
Dan Long
Phyllis Little
Sandra Lucas

TEAM 2

Mike Evans
Ronnie Adair
Roy Waite
Kristi Stamnes
Eric Jones

ATTACHMENT 2 *** (This is the Talking Points packet that was presented to the Legislators during the DC visit.) ***

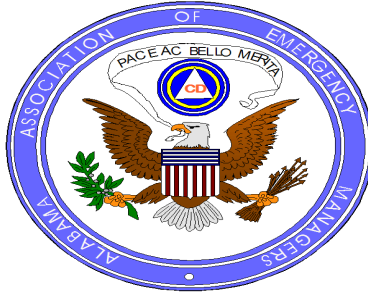


Alabama Association Of Emergency Managers

Legislative Visit

Washington, D.C.

March 8-12, 2009



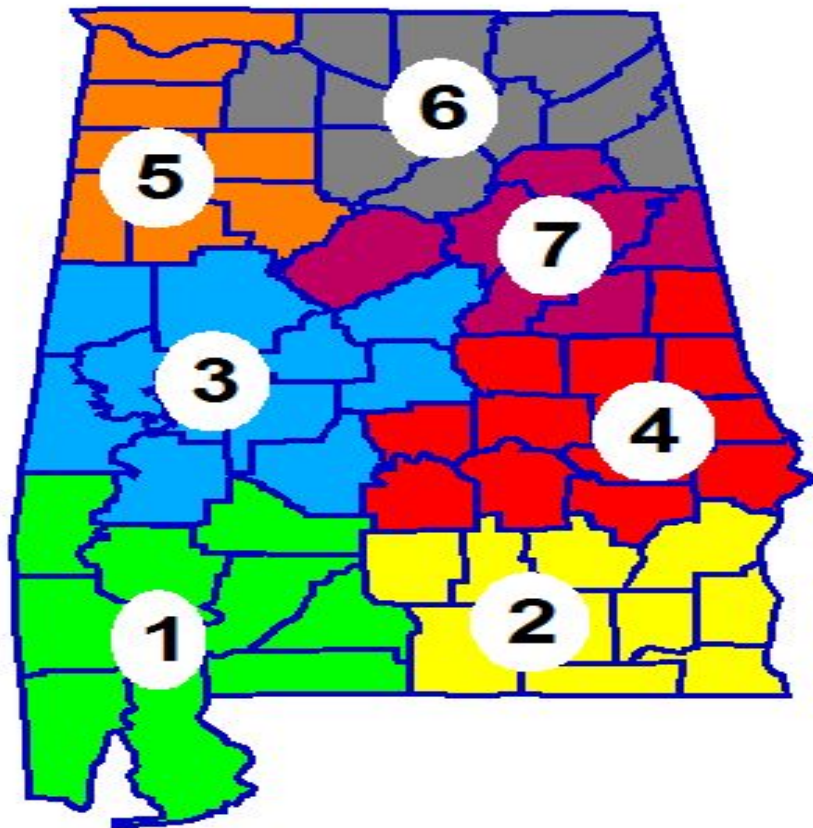
Alabama Association of Emergency Managers (AAEM)

Legislative Visit to Washington, D.C. - March 8-12, 2009

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AAEM Reps and Demographics



President

President-Elect

Past President

Area 1

Area 2

Area 3

Area 4

Area 5

Area 6

Area 7

Area 8

Ellen Haynes St. Clair Co. EMA

Dan Long, Calhoun Co. EMA

Eddie Hicks, Morgan Co. EMA

Ronnie Adair, Mobile Co. EMA

Kristi Starnes, Covington Co. EMA

Wayne Hayes, Bibb Co. EMA

Eric Jones, Elmore Co. EMA

Scott Porter, Fayette Co. EMA

Phyllis Little, Cullman Co. EMA

Debra Gaither, Etowah Co. EMA

Yasamie Richardson, AEMA



About AAEM

Alabama Association of Emergency Managers (AAEM) is a non-profit organization of Emergency Management personnel established to:

- ✓ **Instill and stimulate love of our community, state and country.**
- ✓ **Advocate a strong emergency preparedness program adequate for the defense of our country.**
- ✓ **Foster fraternal relations between Emergency Management personnel at all levels of government.**
- ✓ **Provide a recognizable force through which Emergency matters of interest and concern.**
- ✓ **Establish an alliance between local EMA offices and other agencies of state and local government which have emergency preparedness responsibilities for the exchange of ideas and concerns.**
- ✓ **Establish an effective liaison with businesses, industries and educational institutions.**
- ✓ **Promote professionalism among Emergency Management personnel by establishing performance standards and encouraging continuing education.**
- ✓ **Promote necessary legislation to enhance emergency preparedness at both the state and national levels.**



TALKING POINT # 1

Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) Funding

ISSUE:

- The FY 2010 funding amounts for the Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPG) have not been released. The total need is \$487 million a figure derived from the Biennial Survey of the National Emergency Management Association.
- EMPG is called "the backbone of our nation's emergency management system" in an Appropriations conference report constitutes the only source of direct federal funding for state and local governments to provide basic emergency coordination and planning capabilities including those related to homeland security. This is a shared cost – requiring a minimum match of 50%.
- EMPG has been underfunded for decades and is currently underfunded forcing local emergency management programs to “over-match” the available EMPG allocations.
- EMPG should be maintained in a separate account to ensure visibility of the nation's state and local emergency management funding.

In a majority of the smaller counties in Alabama EMPG Funding is the only reason the Emergency Management Program Exists. EMPG is a program that works and is the lifeline of Local Emergency Management. The Alabama Emergency Management Association would oppose any legislation that would result in altering the focus, or intent of EMPG.

ACTION REQUESTED:

- Increase EMPG funding to \$487 million; allocate it directly to State Emergency Management Programs, to provide local emergency management the capability to adequately manage an all-hazards program.
- Respectfully request that increasing EMPG funding to \$487 million be included in member's priority request letter to the Appropriations Subcommittees on Homeland Security.
- Clarify language in the guidance to conform to an all-hazards approach.



TALKING POINT # 2

FEMA-Declaration Transparency Issues

ISSUE:

- The declaration process for giving Individual Assistance to those affected in a disaster area is currently not very timely nor transparent.
- If the devastated area is not declared a Presidential disaster, an appeal may take up to 120 days before Small Business Administration (SBA) will either provide assistance or uphold the denial of a declaration.
- The intent of the FEMA Individual Assistance is to help homeowners and renters affected by the disaster with housing needs and necessary expenses. The guidance is very vague on a formula or threshold for meeting criteria to be eligible for declaration.
- Presidential declarations have been inconsistent in the past. Although all disasters are different, there should be a more consistent, more transparent process to follow.
- Pre-disaster declaration parameters are undefined.

ACTION REQUESTED:

- Create a “formula” applicable to population density for declaring disasters consistent, clear and concise and made in a timely manner.
- Clearly define the process FEMA undergoes in determining declaration eligibility.
- Make the declaration process objective instead of subjective
- Make the declaration process transparent as it moves from the State to the White House



TALKING POINT # 3

Federal Preparedness Grants

ISSUE:

- Federal preparedness grants contain wording that is inconsistent in reflecting the support of an all-hazards approach.
- Grant application guidelines are too laborious for rural counties with one-person offices.
- Grant maintenance requirements are also very labor intensive.

ACTION REQUESTED:

- Maintain flexibility for all-hazard capacity building (specifically agriculture and natural hazards)
- Allocate appropriate funding on a multi-year basis to allow for long-range planning, mitigation, maintenance and implementation
- Guidance needs to streamline maintenance requirements



TALKING POINT # 4

National Weather Service (NWS) Identity and Budget

ISSUE:

- It is important that the Nation's National Weather Service continue to provide crucial information and severe weather warnings to the public and Emergency managers. In order to provide the necessary warning information to the public on a timely basis, it is very important that EMA offices have adequate 24/7/365 services.
- NOAA has been proposing to meld the budget of the NWS into the NOAA "cross agency goals" making it easier to fund less critical services. Although last year's increase occurred, their budget as written is unclear, clouding the shortfalls in personnel forcing them to decrease public outreach programs.

ACTION REQUESTED:

- NWS needs to maintain their identity and budget separate from NOAA
- Keep local offices in operation 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Increase public outreach programs (Ex. Programming weather radios)
- Fully fund the NWS to provide for personnel shortfalls and to avoid harming public outreach programs
- Grant funding to allow the purchase of weather radios for citizens within our counties to serve as early warning devices, similar to the grant funding used to purchase sirens as early warning devices.



TALKING POINT # 5

FEMA returned to an Independent Agency and Cabinet Level Position

ISSUE:

- The mission of FEMA is to prepare for and deal with the consequences of all hazards, natural and man-made, including those from a terrorist attack in the event that prevention fails. The mission of DHS is to prevent terrorist attacks and secure the borders of the United States.
- Crisis and consequence management should be managed by two separate agencies and not under the umbrella of DHS.

ACTION REQUESTED:

- FEMA should be made an independent agency and the FEMA Administrator should be reinstated as a member of the President's Cabinet.
- Remove FEMA from DHS keeping all four functions of the Emergency Management Cycle intact (mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery).
- As an independent agency FEMA should be allowed to develop their own budget and keep it separate from DHS.



Other Areas of Concern for AAEM

Focus on the following issues will address immediate needs in Alabama:

- 1. Quickly find solutions for outstanding Recovery Housing issues as a result of Katrina before June 1, 2009.**
- 2. Fix Logistics - Help states increase capability to provide locals with the first 72 hours of commodities after a disaster.**
- 3. Consider allowing locals to administer debris recovery efforts through community block grants to reduce the FEMA Bureaucracy and reimbursement timing issues.**
- 4. Restore decision making power and authority to the FCO and FEMA Regional Administrator during disasters.**
- 5. Build consistency in FEMA disaster operations and recovery field staff. Due to untimely turnover EMA's never work with a consistent FEMA official and accountability is lost.**
- 6. Clarify Individual Assistance Thresholds based on a sliding scale for small, medium and large states.**
- 7. Provide direct grants to state and locals for increased public awareness initiatives.**



AAEM Contacts

If our association could assist you with any further information please feel free to contact:

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