

As Chairman, Bilirakis' position will be vital to the state of Florida, as he will oversee FEMA, emergency grant programs, communication during emergency situations, and disaster response and recovery efforts.

"The Department of Homeland Security must continue to improve its communication and emergency preparedness, and since valuable taxpayer dollars are at stake, I will make certain it does so as efficiently and effectively as possible," Bilirakis said. "As chairman, I will continue to ensure the safety of our nation and enhance the way in which we respond and prepare for disasters."

Bilirakis spent the past two years as lead Republican of the Homeland Security Committee's Subcommittee on Management, Investigations, and Oversight.

Homeland Security Committee Chairman-elect Peter King (R-N.Y.) lauded Bilirakis' appointment.

"I am very pleased to make this appointment," he said. "As a member of the Homeland Security Committee since 2007, Gus has demonstrated his steadfast commitment to protecting our homeland from the terrorists who continue to plot and execute attacks against our nation. Gus, a Floridian, is greatly qualified to lead this subcommittee; he and his constituents deal with potential disasters each hurricane season and spent much of this year preparing to respond to the possible arrival of oil from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Since 2009, he has served as the top Republican on the Subcommittee on Management, Investigations, and Oversight, a role in which he oversaw the entire Department of Homeland Security, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency."

Under his new role, Bilirakis and the Subcommittee will oversee preparedness grant programs. For more than a year, Bilirakis has demanded more oversight of FEMA's grant program after it was discovered that it provided more than \$1 million grants to the controversial group ACORN.

The Subcommittee will also help guide state and local officials before and after natural disasters - such as hurricanes - and catastrophes such as the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill.

The Homeland Security Committee was established in 2002 to provide Congressional oversight of the Department of Homeland Security and better protect the American people against a possible terrorist attack and during disasters. In 2005, the House of Representatives granted the committee permanent status.

In addition to his duties for the Homeland Security Committee, Bilirakis also will serve on the Veterans' Affairs and Foreign Affairs Committees in the 112th Congress.