

May 25, 2007

WASHINGTON -With the start of the official 2007 Hurricane Season, U.S. Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), a member of the House Homeland Security Committee, yesterday questioned federal and state emergency management officials on the state of Florida's hurricane disaster readiness.

Among those present at a meeting of the Florida Congressional Delegation were R. David Paulison, administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and Craig Fugate, director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management. Paulison and Fugate, who also testified last week before Bilirakis's Homeland Security Committee, reiterated that Florida is prepared for this upcoming hurricane season and that both the state and federal governments are ready to respond should a major storm impact the state.

"All Americans want to know what is being done to ensure that a Katrina-type disaster response never happens again," said Rep. Bilirakis. "Given the serious threat hurricanes pose to Florida, I was assured to hear from both Administrator Paulison and Director Fugate that our state has the necessary contingencies in place for what is predicted to be an active hurricane season," said Bilirakis.

On Monday, Congressman Bilirakis delivered remarks on the floor of the House of Representatives in support of a resolution supporting the goals and ideals of National Hurricane Preparedness Week. In his remarks, he encouraged Americans to do their part in preparing for all natural disasters.

"Disaster readiness should not solely lie on the shoulders of the government. I hope that individuals will use this week as a reminder that they, too, must prepare themselves. I have urged my constituents to develop family disaster plans and create supply kits," said Bilirakis on the floor of the House. "It is also important that they follow local weather forecasts and heed any emergency hurricane warnings they receive. These and other simple steps can help save lives."

Throughout his short time in Congress as a member of the Homeland Security Committee, Bilirakis has made it a priority to propose legislation that would improve the nation's disaster preparedness and address the skyrocketing cost of insurance for homeowners' in high-risk areas. Congressman Bilirakis has encouraged his colleagues to support legislation that he has introduced that would allow tax credits for home and business owners who better strengthen their property for major wind damage.

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