



KEYSTONE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

"Steeped In Tradition With a Vision For The Future"

TESTIMONY

Keystone Emergency Management Association

**Before the
House Veterans Affairs and
Emergency Preparedness Committee**

HOUSE BILL 2562

Presented by:

**Angel L. Gillette, CEM
Eastern Area President
Keystone Emergency Management Association**

**August 29, 2012
Media, PA**

Introduction

Good morning Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. My name is Angel Gillette. I am the Hazard Mitigation/Disaster Recovery Manager for Northampton County, Pennsylvania. In addition to my duties with the Northampton County Division of Emergency Management Services, I have the honor of representing this region as Eastern Area President of the Keystone Emergency Management Association (KEMA). I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 2562 which will amend the Emergency Management Services Code, commonly referred to as Title 35.

KEMA Mission & Purpose

The Keystone Emergency Management Association, also known as KEMA, is the state-wide professional association dedicated to the enhancement of the Emergency Management profession. KEMA's mission is to promote, support and advocate Comprehensive Emergency Management at all levels of Pennsylvania's public and private sectors. Since its inception in 1977, KEMA has provided a state-wide forum for emergency management professionals across all disciplines to exchange ideas, techniques, and best practices. Our membership consists of emergency managers at the state, county and local government levels, members of the military, students in the field of emergency management, and representatives from private industry and the non-profit sector.

KEMA has a long standing tradition of working closely with other local, state, and national organizations, as well as the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA). This includes our parent organization; the U.S. Council of the International Association of Emergency Managers (USA-IAEM). It is these many collaborations and relationships that provide our organization with crucial insights into the current state of Emergency Management in Pennsylvania and how the proposed changes to Title 35 will strengthen the public safety of our residents and visitors.

There are numerous items in House Bill 2562 that, if enacted, would strengthen our Emergency Management program. In consideration of your time, I would like to highlight only three of the proposed changes that are addressed in this legislation.

Regionalization

The regionalization of Emergency Management services is consistently a key point of discussion by local and state officials whenever the topic of improving service delivery is discussed. The approach outlined in the text of the House Bill 2562 encourages a combination of resources to better utilize existing funding and further encourage collaboration between neighboring municipalities. Here in the Eastern Region, I have witnessed how successful a regionalized Emergency Management collaborative can be. In Montgomery County, the Eastern Montgomery County Emergency Management Group was established to work collaboratively together for the safety and security of more than 300,000 residents, or nearly 40% of the county's population. Its membership makes up 20% of the county's municipalities. This regional initiative was recognized as an outstanding example of a successful partnership with the 2002 Governor's Award for Excellence in Local Government.

Worker's Comp Coverage

The second component of this legislation that KEMA would like to highlight is the language that would provide for more comprehensive Worker's Comp coverage to Emergency Management volunteers. Volunteers routinely put their own personal safety on the line to meet the public safety needs of their community. To quote one former US President, "Volunteerism is an act of heroism on a grand scale. And it matters profoundly. It does more than help people beat the odds; it changes the odds." Ensuring that these individuals and their families are protected in case of an injury is something that is long overdue.

Emergency Management Evolution

Finally, Title 35 serves as the compass that directs Emergency Management in this Commonwealth. It is the umbrella that many of us work within to address the ever changing hazards that impact our communities. As you've heard previously from my colleagues, the

existing Title 35 that governs Emergency Management in Pennsylvania is no longer relevant to the world we live in today. Since 1996, the last time Title 35 was amended, Emergency Management has evolved to incorporate and plan for events such as; the 2007 Valentine's Day Winter Storm, Hurricane Katrina, the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks, the creation of the US Department of Homeland Security, and numerous other state and federal changes.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I want to again thank you for allowing me to express KEMA's support for House Bill 2562. The update to Title 35 is much needed and long overdue. The positive effects of these changes far outweigh any potential clarity or technical issues that may be present in its current form. The Emergency Management community needs this update. And more importantly, the safety and security of the residents and visitors of Pennsylvania need it.