

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 12, 2006

Mr. David M. Walker
Comptroller General
U.S. General Accountability Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Walker:

This letter is to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) investigate the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grant program. Specifically the GAO should examine whether DHS's criteria and process for determining eligibility for the UASI grant accurately takes into account the risks faced by urban areas.

In January, the Department of Homeland Security announced areas eligible for Fiscal Year 2006 UASI grants. For the first time, Sacramento and San Diego were not identified as high-risk areas, although they have received UASI funding in the past. Therefore, these cities are only eligible this year for "sustainment funding" and will not be eligible next year.

Sacramento is the capital of the most populous state in the nation and home to dozens of critical federal and state government buildings. In addition, much of the state's water, electricity, and telecommunication systems are managed from Sacramento. The San Diego area contains the nation's 7th-largest city adjacent to a heavily-trafficked international border, a busy port, tourist attractions, and major military installations.

We seek your analysis of the following aspects of the UASI eligibility determination process:

- Is the Department considering the proper input data? Has it left out relevant data?
- Is the input data reliable and valid?
- Are the input data being weighted properly?
- Are the parameters of the eligible areas appropriate? In particular, does the process reflect an unfair bias against urban areas where critical infrastructure is set outside a ten-mile buffer area?
- How does a grant applicant's past performance in accomplishing its preparedness objectives influence future awards?
- Is there sufficient local and private sector involvement in determining how areas are evaluated, and performing those evaluations?
- Does the risk assessment process adequately account for the unique missions and strategic significance of major military installations?
- Have risks to military personnel, and the off-base local infrastructure upon which they depend, been adequately addressed for urban areas with military installations?

- Does the risk assessment process adequately account for the vulnerabilities and local law enforcement responsibilities associated with proximity to an international border?
- Does the process adequately account for the cascading societal and economic effects of an attack?

Unfortunately, our conversations with DHS officials have not given us confidence that UASI eligibility determinations for Fiscal Year 2006 were appropriate. Because the Department will begin determining Fiscal Year 2007 UASI grant eligibility within a few months, there is an urgent need to identify and address flaws in the current process. We therefore ask you to immediately initiate an investigation.

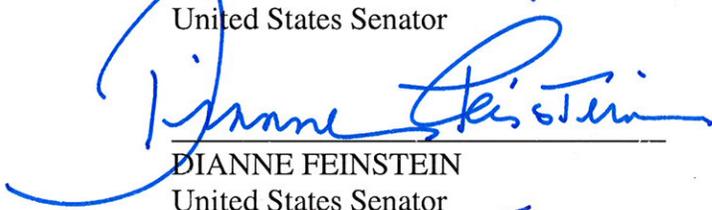
Sincerely,



BARBARA BOXER
United States Senator



DORIS MATSUI
Member of Congress



DIANNE FEINSTEIN
United States Senator



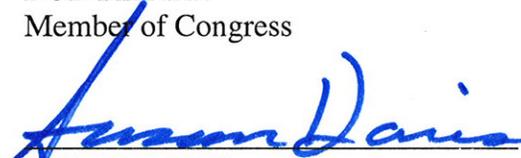
BENNIE THOMPSON
Member of Congress



BOB FILNER
Member of Congress



MIKE THOMPSON
Member of Congress



SUSAN DAVIS
Member of Congress