

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

March 1, 2018

The Honorable Kirstjen Nielsen
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
301 7th Street SW
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Nielsen,

In the wake of the worst mass shooting in our nation's modern history, the Nevada delegation writes you today regarding the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) Relative Risk Profile formula for the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI). Over the years, the Nevada delegation has been heavily engaged in this process and continues to believe the funding formula does not adequately consider key factors, including the impact of tourism on local economies. We appreciate your attention to this important matter and respectfully urge you to modify the risk formula to better reflect the threats posed to high volume tourist cities like Las Vegas.

As you know, the UASI grant program was established by Congress to provide critical funding to ensure the safety of high-risk urban areas from terror attacks. With guidance from Congress, DHS developed a formula to rank the risk of a terror threat in each urban area. In light of the October 1st tragedy that took the lives of 58 innocent people at a country music festival, as well as continued threats posed by foreign terror organizations, we believe this formula must accurately assess each city's vulnerability, threat, and consequence of a terrorist attack. Your Department also must rely on data that fairly analyzes each city. We believe that the current formula fails to accurately depict certain data points that impact the Consequence Component, specifically the determination of Level 1 and Level 2 assets, and ignores the impact of tourism on localities.

As part of a locality's Risk Profile, qualifying assets are determined as part of its assessment of both the Vulnerability and Consequence Component. Unfortunately, the Las Vegas Strip is "clustered" and considered one asset, despite the fact that there are more than 35 hotels along the Las Vegas Strip. In fact, the Las Vegas Valley is home to 20 of the 30 largest hotels in the world. These include massive resorts with arenas, showrooms, clubs, hotel rooms, convention centers, shopping malls, and casinos. A single property can have over 70,000 employees and visitors on site at any given time; however, your Department clusters all of these properties as a single asset. Given that these heavily populated buildings are precisely the types of assets being targeted by terrorists around the world, we ask that you count these properties individually and not as a cluster, as each one is a viable target for an attack.

Furthermore, the Risk Profile does not take into consideration a locality's tourism economy. As the Entertainment Capital of the World, Las Vegas saw nearly 43 million visitors last year, accounting for an economic impact of \$60 billion. In fact, the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA) found that Southern Nevada is among one of the most tourism-dependent economies in the U.S. Southern Nevada welcomes nearly a million tourists from across the United States and abroad in any given week, many of whom are unfamiliar with local emergency procedures; yet Nevada's first responders must care for and protect them in the event of an emergency.

The Risk Profile also fails to account for the amount of special event assessment rating level (SEAR) events in its formula. Every year, the Las Vegas MSA hosts more than 20,000 conventions and many of these events qualify as SEAR level. Including these types of special events, as well as accounting for their size, attendance, and appeal, would provide a more accurate scope of the risk. The current MSA process does not properly reflect the additional resources necessary to meet these unique demands. The October 1st tragedy emphasized the distinct risks Las Vegas faces as a center of tourism and the need for special consideration of places like Southern Nevada in calculating and distributing UASI funds. We respectfully ask that your department consider this additional responsibility when determining rankings for the Risk Profile.

Once again, in light of the threats posed by acts of terrorism to the Las Vegas Strip, the Nevada Congressional delegation is committed to ensuring the Las Vegas Valley has the necessary resources to prevent or respond to a terrorist threat, and we are united in our efforts to make the necessary changes to the MSA Risk profile. It is our hope that you will take into consideration the unique challenges that Las Vegas faces as a premier tourist destination as you continue working to prevent terror attacks in the United States.

Thank you again for your attention to this matter. Please contact us or our staff if you have any further questions, and we look forward to receiving a timely response from you addressing our concerns as outlined in this letter.

Sincerely,



DEAN HELLER
United States Senator



BRIAN SANDOVAL
Governor



CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO
United States Senator



DINA TITUS
United States Congress



JACKY ROSEN
United States Congress



RUBEN I. KIHUEN
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MARK AMODEI
United States Congress