

***Congressman
J. Randy Forbes***
Fourth District of Virginia



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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October 10, 2003

Forbes: Next time shortages could be in Vaccines and Medicine

Washington, DC – Congressman J. Randy Forbes questioned officials about state and federal responses to Hurricane Isabel within Virginia’s Fourth Congressional District today in Chesapeake. Shortages in vital resources during the storm, communication breakdowns between emergency officials, last-minute diversions of supplies, and inequities in the positioning of FEMA Disaster Recovery Centers were some factors that prompted the hearing.

“While Isabel is over, the important thing we need to realize is that next time the problem might not be water and ice. Next time we could be facing a biological attack and the problem could be vaccines and medicine and we need to be prepared. We need to have a plan in effect for the next natural disaster – or God forbid – should we become the victims of a terrorist attack.” Forbes said.

The U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform held the field hearing at 1:30 p.m. in the City of Chesapeake Council Chambers to assess state and federal disaster response, and propose solutions to assure preparedness for future disasters.

Forbes joined Committee Chairman Congressman Tom Davis (VA-11), Congressman Ed Srock (VA-02) and Congressman Robert Scott (VA-03) in hearing testimony from the following individuals:

- Eric Tolbert, Director of the Response Division, Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- The Honorable John Marshall, Secretary of Public Safety, Commonwealth of Virginia
- Mr. David Jolly, Director of Public Safety for Dinwiddie County
- Richard O. Childress, Director of Emergency Management, Isle of Wight County
- Steve Herbert, City Manager/Director of Emergency Services, City of Suffolk
- Steve Best, Fire Chief/Director of Emergency Operations, City of Chesapeake

Congressman Forbes, echoing the concerns of localities testifying, expressed concern that unreliable and disjointed communication between the Commonwealth and FEMA exacerbated problems submitting requests for disaster assistance. He also questioned officials from the state and FEMA regarding the placement of Disaster Recovery Centers (DRC).

“In the Fourth District, where over 15,000 people submitted disaster assistance claims, there was not one Disaster Recovery Center even 12 days after the storm. We still don’t know why they located centers where they did.” Forbes stated.

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