

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 1, 2006

Secretary Michael Chertoff
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Chertoff:

I write today to express my outrage over yesterday's announcement by the Department of Homeland Security regarding high threat funding vital to protect states and localities from the threat of a terrorist attack. As a native New Yorker who proudly served the people of New York through our darkest hour in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks, I am shocked at the drastic funding cut that the State and cities of New York and Buffalo must now contend with. A 36% overall statewide cut in funding, that includes a 40% cut for the City of New York and a 48% cut for the City of Buffalo in high threat money, is simply unacceptable.

The people of New York deserve answers as to why their safety must be put in jeopardy at this time and I request that you provide a classified briefing explaining your justification of these funding cuts to New York while providing additional funding to other states. It is simply unimaginable that the City of Buffalo, with its proximity to the Northern Border and four international crossings, would receive a funding cut of 48% while the City of Louisville, with no border crossing, would see an increase of 70% in funding.

In addition to a classified briefing, please provide written, detailed answers to the following questions as soon as possible.

1. The Department's own documentation states that asset-based risk analysis put the New York City Area in the top 25% of the eligible Urban Areas, and the geographic-based risk analysis put the New York City Area in the top 25% of the eligible Urban Areas, and further that "Each applicant's final funding allocation was determined using a combination of its risk and effectiveness scores, with a two-thirds weight applied to risk and one-third weight applied to effectiveness." Based on this formulation alone, how can the Department justify a full 40% decrease in funding for a high-risk city, when the Department's own analysis requires weighing the risk category more heavily on a 2-1 ratio?
2. The Department chose to award both New York and Washington, D.C., 40% less money this year than last. Please explain why, given that these were the two cities targeted and attacked on September 11, 2001, these funding cuts are appropriate.

3. Please explain how the peer review participants were nominated, screened and selected. Please provide the names, titles and home states of each member of the peer review process. Were any of the panel members from entities who received funding from the Department?
4. At any time before issuing this massive cut in funding did the Department or peer review panel consult with New York City officials to request additional information about its submission or provide it with an opportunity to explain how its proposals would aid in the security of the City?
5. Please explain the Department's justification for reducing the funding for the Buffalo area, which includes Erie and Niagara counties and is home to major international border crossings where millions of people and cargo enter our nation, power plants and major bridges which could be targeted for attack and is where the Lackawanna Six were arrested.
6. In particular with the Buffalo area's proximity to the Northern Border and four international border crossings, what was the justification to cut funding to the city by 48%, while a city such as Louisville KY, with no international border crossings saw an increase in funding of 70%?
7. The Department of Homeland Security defines risk as a combination of threat, vulnerability, and consequence, how can the department defend a 40% cut in funding to a city that has already suffered a major terrorist attack?
8. News reports indicate that the Department and the peer review panel were critical of the City's plan to use funding to pay overtime for police officers. Please explain why paying for police officers to protect critical infrastructure including bridges and tunnels and the millions of Americans who visit New York City for business and tourism, does not serve homeland security needs.
9. News reports indicate that the Department and the peer review panel were critical to the City's plan to use funding for a surveillance camera system, modeled on the London system which is called "Ring of Steel." Please explain the Department and peer review panel's analysis of London's system and its effectiveness, and how such a system in New York City would not serve homeland security needs.
10. My staff counted at least 13 sites listed on the National Parks Service website that are categorized as a National monument, yet the Department of Homeland Security listed New York as having zero National Monuments and Icons at risk, please explain the department's claim that the City of New York has a zero count for monuments and icons at risk?
11. How can the Administration determine that there is no threat facing national landmarks and icons in New York City when its own intelligence found a credible threat against the Brooklyn Bridge?

The Department's primary responsibility is protecting our homeland. After several years of debate, both Congress and the Administration agreed that funding for homeland security funding should be allocated based on risk. There is no conceivable rationale to conclude that New York City is facing a lower risk of terrorist attack and so the Department's decision to drastically cut its funding appears to defy logic. I look forward to your briefing and to learning about how we can work together to rectify this untenable situation.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Schumer