

**FEDERAL HOMELAND SECURITY  
ASSISTANCE TO AMERICA'S HOMETOWNS:**

**A SURVEY AND REPORT  
FROM THE  
DEMOCRATIC TASK FORCE  
ON HOMELAND SECURITY**

October 29, 2003

Prepared by The Democratic Task Force on Homeland Security  
Chair, Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney (NY-14)

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## **INTRODUCTION – BACKGROUND**

At the end of July 2003, the Democratic Task Force on Homeland Security, the House Democratic Caucus and several Democratic Members of Congress distributed a survey on Hometown Security to local governments, local officials, police, firefighters and other front-line workers. We received 304 responses from individuals and organizations in states ranging from Vermont to California. Specifically, the survey aimed to determine the level of assistance and guidance the federal government and Department of Homeland Security gives the men and women who are the first line of defense against terrorists and who will be the first ones to respond to terrorist attacks.

This is the Task Force's effort to try to gauge the level of preparedness and needs on the ground in America's hometowns, where the defense against terrorism is most critical and must be the most stout. Previously, the Task Force brought three panels of local officials and front-line workers from across the United States to Washington to participate in a hearing on the homeland security needs in their hometowns.

The survey results give the Task Force concrete answers to standardized questions from a wide swath of respondents (See Appendix A for list). While this is not a scientific study, the Task Force will use the extensive responses from the hundreds of respondents in communities across the country as it reviews, plans and proposes homeland security policy.

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**ROBERT MENENDEZ**  
Member of Congress

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**CAROLYN B. MALONEY**  
Member of Congress

## **FINDINGS**

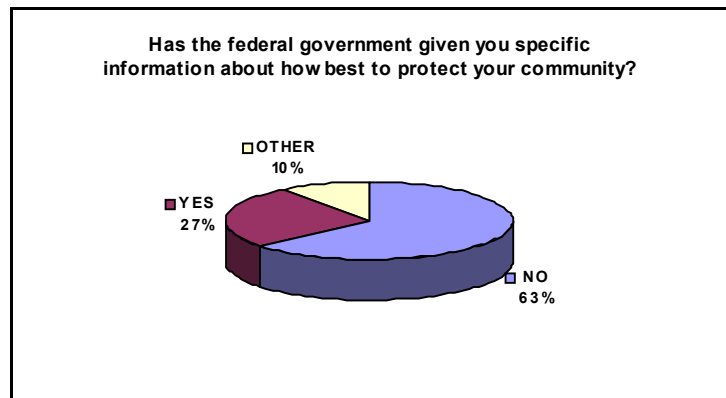
## I. Direction from DHS

**“No one community can be expected to handle a mass casualty situation on its own.... We have information of a general nature but not specific to the area.” – Triangle J Council of Governments (Research Triangle, North Carolina)**

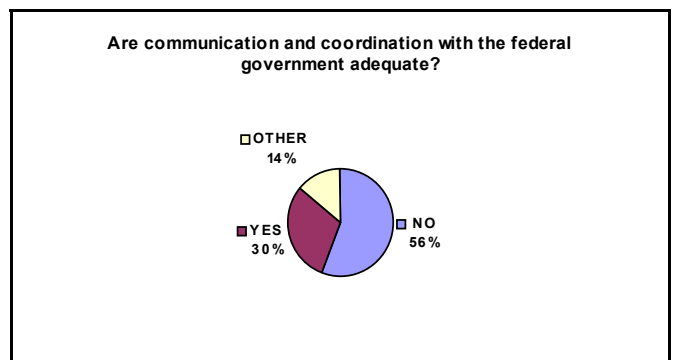
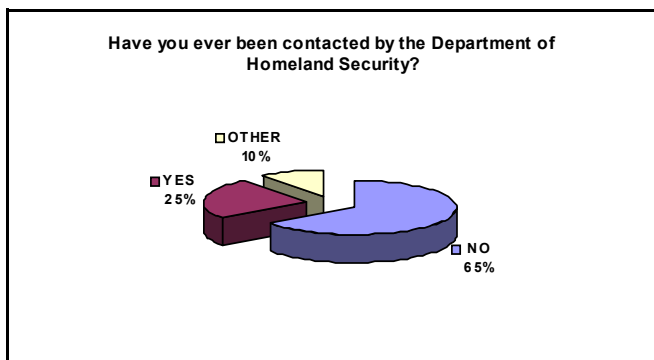
More than two years after the 9/11 attacks, and a full year after the inception of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), there is resounding concern in America’s hometowns about the lack of communication and direction coming from the federal government and its clearinghouse for security information, DHS.

Even the **District of Columbia**, a city that receives added attention and security from the National Guard and Armed Forces, responded to a question asking whether the federal government gives it specific information about how best to protect the community: **“No, other than the same information they have provided all communities.”**

In fact, across the board, 63% of those who responded to the question said that the federal government does not give them specific information to protect their communities. According to the **Taylors Bridge (North Carolina) Fire Department**, the only homeland security it receives is **“through the news media.”**

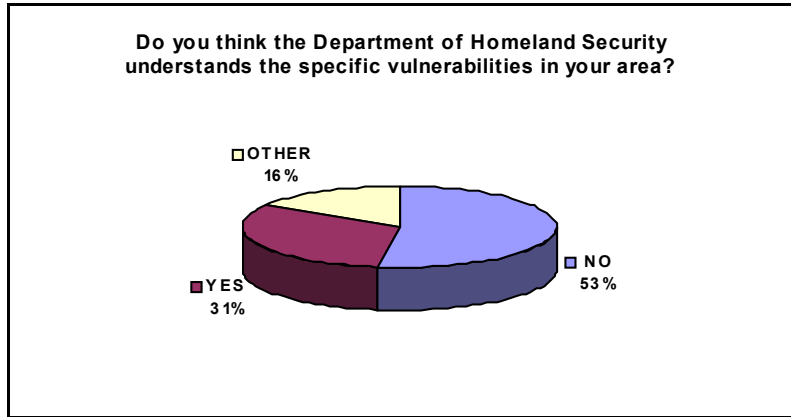


Taking the issue one step further, when asked if they had ever been contacted by DHS, 65% of those who responded to the question said “No.” Only 30% said that communication with the federal government is adequate, while a majority said it was not. Certain respondents were more optimistic that the communications problems will be corrected in



the future. In the opinion of the one major West Coast oil refinery, DHS needs “time to understand the issues at the local levels and to grow as an organization. The DHS is still organizing and hiring personnel to address and complete all the tasks for which it is responsible.”

Nevertheless, the respondents’ overall sense of DHS’s connection to their security needs was summed up by their responses when asked if they thought DHS understands specific vulnerabilities in their areas. Only 31% answered “Yes.”



To this point, most of the political focus related to the federal government’s homeland security assistance for our

hometown has been on the lack of funding. Certainly, this survey does document that dire need for funds for local governments and front-line workers (see Part III). However, this survey has also made it clear that the dialogue, or lack thereof, between the federal government and American’s hometowns about how to prevent terrorism in our communities is another gaping hole in the defense of the homeland.

Military personnel and federal law enforcement cannot be everywhere, securing every city and every town at once. Just like on 9/11, the first people on the scene in the event of another terrorist attack, charged with saving lives and securing the area, will be local law enforcement and emergency responders. If those front-line workers do not have specific threat updates to help prevent terrorist attacks in their hometowns and have not been given specific suggestions for preparedness, our communities will remain vulnerable to high-casualty attacks.

When less than one third of respondents believe there exists sufficient communication with the federal government, we know there is a problem. Back and forth communication between federal and local governments is vital – if the two parties are talking past each other, or not talking to each other at all, then hometown security has major holes.

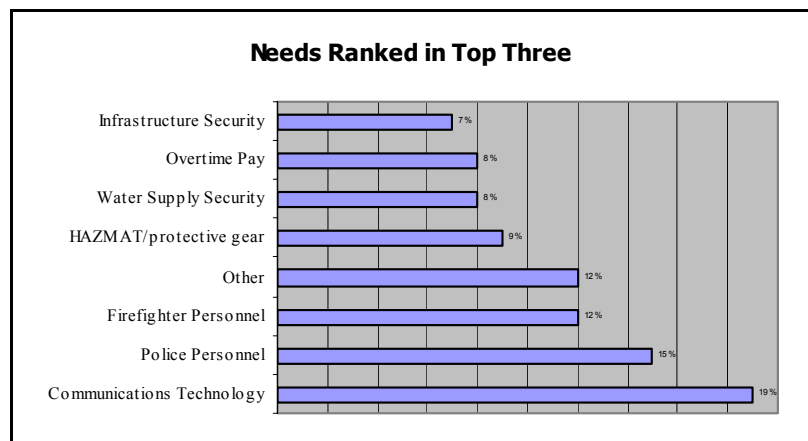
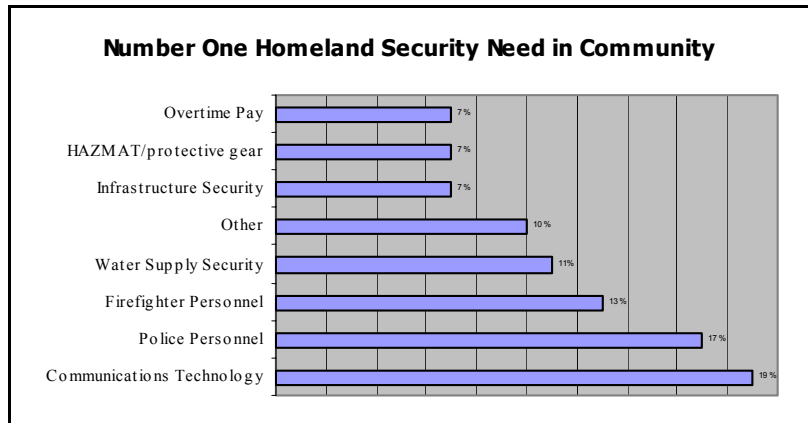
## II. Priorities and Vulnerabilities

In an effort to determine whether there is any uniformity among local needs, the Task Force asked participants specifics about the areas in which our hometowns are looking for help. Respondents were asked to rate 13 priority need areas. They included:

- Border Security
- Port Security
- Animal/food Security
- Water Supply Security
- Infrastructure Security
- Police Personnel
- Firefighter Personnel
- HAZMAT/protective gear
- Communications Technology
- Overtime Pay
- Increased information sharing
- Other

On the whole, respondents were concerned about their first responders. The areas of need that were most often ranked first were communications technology and police personnel. These are not entirely surprising – the Task Force has heard first-hand testimony from first responders worried about interoperability and malfunctioning of communications devices, as well as staffs that are working too much overtime.

The strong response to the survey from the emergency responder community emphasized their needs in the report. Thus, firefighter personnel, HAZMAT/protective gear and overtime pay were also some of the top ranked need areas.



Aside from emergency responder-associated needs, communities reflected a high level of concern for the security of their water supplies and infrastructure.

These results demonstrate a serious, deep-rooted concern by emergency responders and for emergency responders – a concern that was also reflected in the Council on Foreign Relations’s recent report, entitled, “Emergency Responders: Drastically Underfunded, Dangerously Unprepared.”

### **III. Funding**

**“Our city is not able to adequately address our homeland security needs. Extremely tight city budget.” – Omaha (NE) Police Union Local 101**

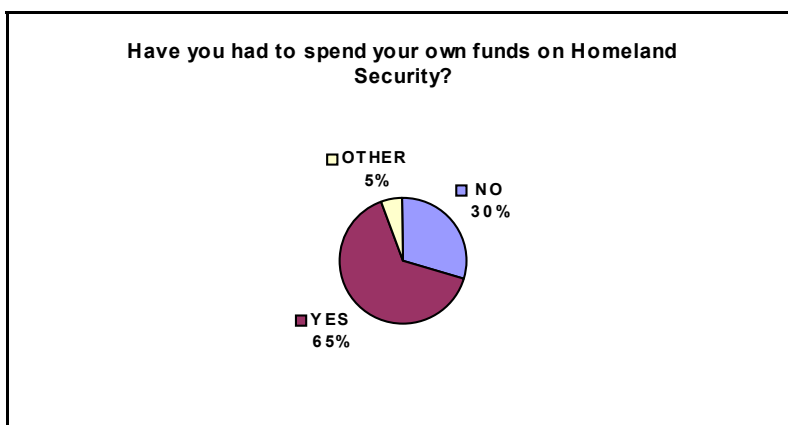
That local governments and front-line homeland security workers are strapped for cash when it comes to security is a well-documented issue. This survey serves to corroborate that sentiment and the crisis need for the increased flow of security money to America’s hometowns.

During the Task Force’s hearing in Washington, a New York City firefighter told us that his force is less prepared today than it was before 9/11 because of budget constraints. The Montgomery County, MD Executive told us that his jurisdiction has been forced to make deep cuts in education spending to compensate for security costs. The survey responses confirm that, in a poor economy, homeland security has put the squeeze on local governments.

One **East Coast city in a high-threat metropolitan area** (the location will not be identified for security purposes) wrote in a response: **“Budgetary restraints prevent us expending the man-hours necessary for preventative patrols, related training, and equipment.”** That sentiment was echoed by many other respondents, all of whom are experiencing severe budget crunches.

A vast majority of the respondents – 65% – said they have had to spend from their own pockets on homeland security.

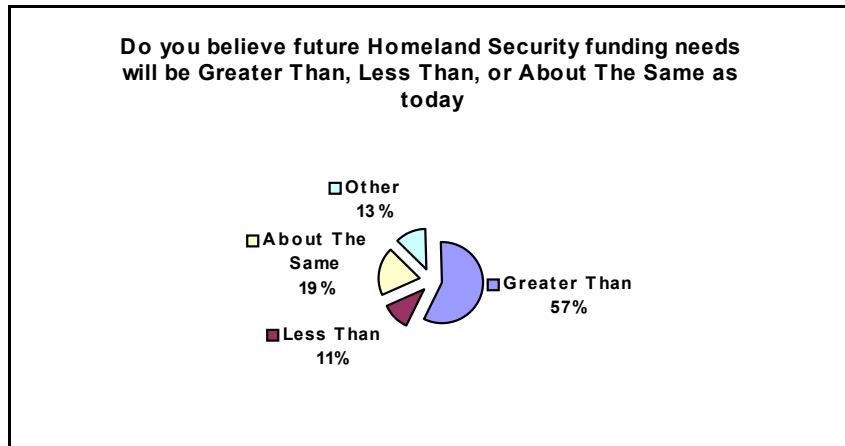
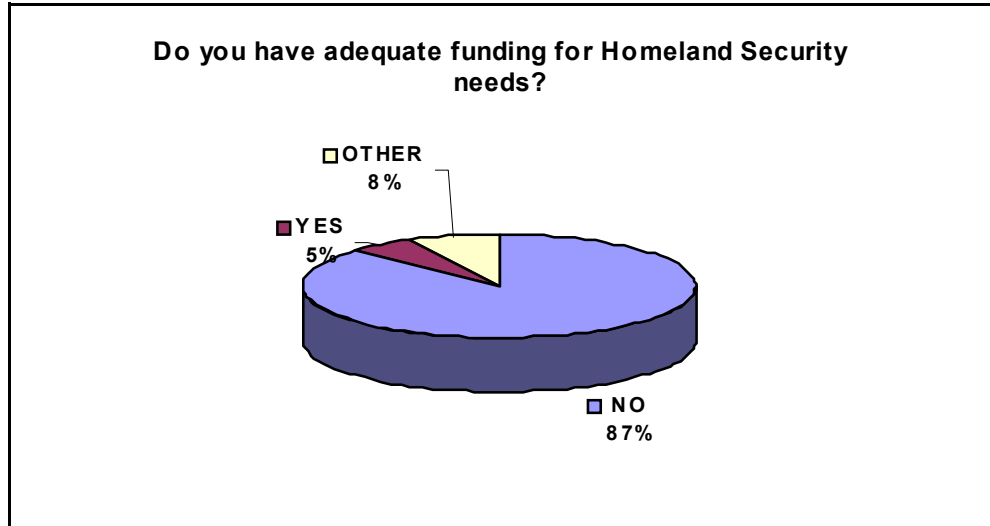
In one of the most noticeable



and menacing statistics from the survey, a whopping 87% answered that they do not have adequate funding for Homeland Security needs.

Making matters more daunting, 57% of those who responded said future

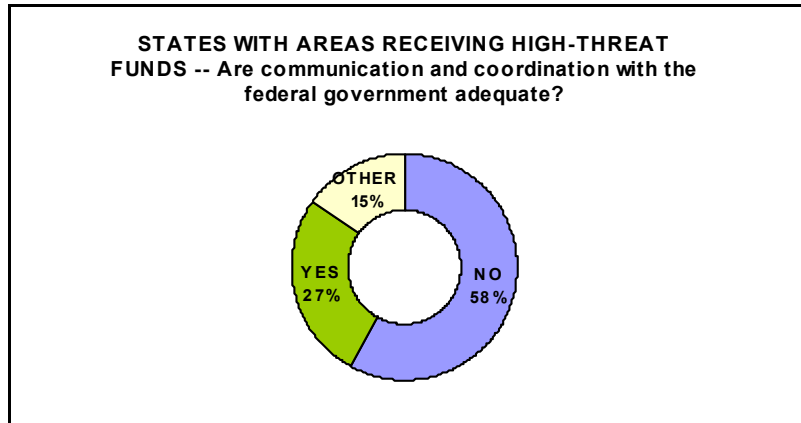
homeland security funding needs will be “Greater Than” the current level, 19 % said it will be “About the Same,” and only 11% thought it will be “Less Than.”



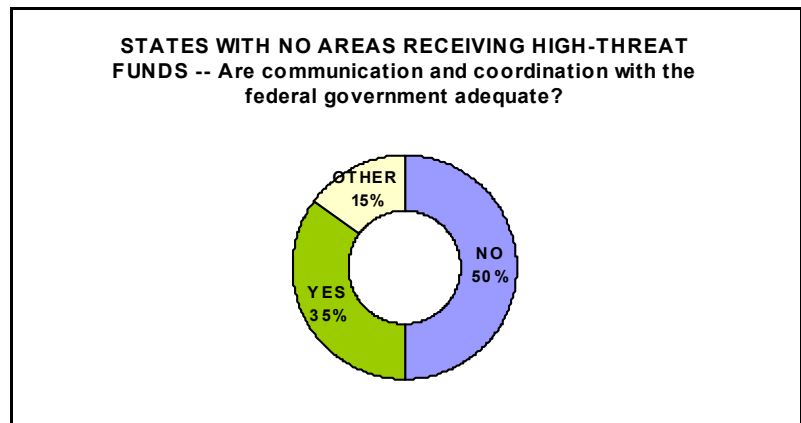


**IV. Assistance based on threat**

Some interesting disparities in the assessment of federal assistance appeared when the statistics are separated by states that have areas which have received high-threat homeland security grants (NY, NJ, CA, DC, MD, VA, TX, PA, MA, FL, IL, MI, OH, CO, LA) and those that have not (VT, NC, NM, IN, NE, OK, PR).

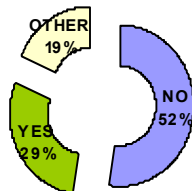


In their responses to a number of the survey questions, communities in states with areas the federal government has deemed high-threat are unhappy with the federal government's assistance. Only 27% of respondents in those states believe communication and coordination with the federal government are adequate, while a more modest 35% of states that have not received high-threat money believe it is adequate.

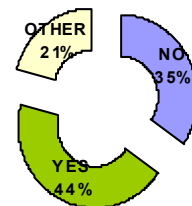


More stark, a vast majority of respondents from states that have received high-threat funds, 52%, believe that they are not given enough flexibility to spend federal homeland security funds. However, a clear 44% plurality of those from states that have not received high-threat funds think that flexibility is sufficient.

**STATES WITH AREAS RECEIVING HIGH-THREAT FUNDS -- Do you have enough flexibility to spend federal Homeland Security funds in the best possible manner for local needs?**



**STATES WITH NO AREAS RECEIVING HIGH-THREAT FUNDS -- Do you have enough flexibility to spend federal Homeland Security fund in the best possible manner for local needs?**

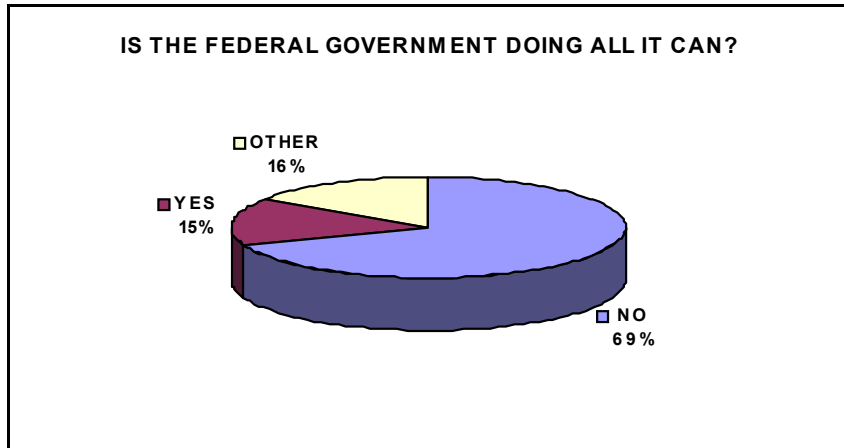


**V. The Bottom Line – The federal government is falling short**

**“Our specific needs are huge and a long way from being fully met.” – Port Arthur (TX) Fire Department**

The Task Force asked the question: “Is the federal government doing all it can?”

69% of those who answered said “No.



It is made clear throughout the survey, and confirmed by the answer to this question, that many of America’s hometowns are not prepared for terrorism, just as they were not prepared on September 10, 2001. They certainly are without the tools or resources to do their jobs well.

Furthermore, they have been left alone to tread water by the federal government and Department of Homeland Security, and many states, cities and towns are struggling mightily with that reality. They have been asked to take on an enormous added burden – to not only patrol the streets for robbers, but to keep tabs on terrorist activity; to not only be ready to fight house fires, but to prepare to deal with catastrophic explosions – but have not received much of a roadmap about how to do so.

The Democratic Task Force on Homeland Security is grateful to the men and women on homeland security’s front lines for taking the time to share their experiences. The Task Force will continue use the results of this survey as a guideline for future activity to strengthen the United States’s defenses against terrorists.

**VI. Legislative Action**

The Task Force and Democratic Caucus have long advocated increased funding for local governments and emergency responders to help defend against terrorism as outlined in the *Democratic Strategy on Homeland Security*. Until the Task Force hears from the men and women on the front lines that they have adequate resources and tools to do the job, that advocacy will continue - before, during, and after the appropriations process.

This survey portrays the shortcomings of federal homeland security assistance to our hometowns in more ways than just funding. Specifically, it makes clear the federal government's fundamental lack of understanding of local needs and concerns. The Task Force will support substantive legislation that corrects this problem.

One current piece of legislation, which has 147 Democratic co-sponsors, and which the Task Force has already voiced its support, addresses many of the problems the federal government has connecting with local needs; it is the "Preparing America to Respond Effectively" (PREPARE Act, H.R. 3158). By calling on police, fire fighters and emergency personnel to serve on an Independent Task Force to assess local needs and priorities, the legislation would more effectively put the federal government in touch with the situation on the front-lines of terrorism preparedness in America.

The legislation would create a process for State and local responders to identify their needs for essential terrorism preparedness capabilities, so that front-line workers in any jurisdiction can determine what they have, what they need, and how much it will cost to meet their needs. The PREPARE Act would also begin to address the problem of providing interoperable communications equipment for emergency responders, which the respondents to our survey identified as their number one need.

As future legislation is developed to address some of the other problems identified in this survey, our Task Force will seriously consider its merits, with the words and opinions of our front-line homeland security workers as our guide.

APPENDIX A

**RESULTS FROM TASK FORCE'S  
HOMETOWN SECURITY SURVEY**

**Have you had to spend your own funds on Homeland Security?**

Yes	65%	191
No	30%	89
Other	5%	16

**Do you have adequate funding for Homeland Security?**

Yes	5%	13
No	87%	206
Other	8%	18

**Do you believe future Homeland Security funding needs will be  
*GREATER THAN, LESS THAN, or ABOUT THE SAME* as today?**

Greater Than		57%	134
Less Than		11%	26
About the Same		19%	46
Other		13%	30

**Please rank the top Homeland Security funding needs in your  
community from the list below:**

**Border Security, Port Security, Animal/Food Security, Water Supply Security,  
Infrastructure Security, Police Personnel, Firefighter Personnel, HAZMAT Suits,  
Communications Technology, Overtime Pay, Increased Information Sharing, Other**

**TOP RANKING**

1	Communications Tecnology	19%	43
2	Police Personnel	17%	41
3	Firefighter Personnel	13%	30
4	Water Supply Security	11%	26
	Other	10%	23

**Do you think the Department of Homeland Security understands  
the specific vulnerabilities in you area?**

Yes	31%	74
No	53%	123

Other	16%	38
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**Have you reviewed your vulnerabilities (if any) to terrorist attacks?**

Yes	85%	229
No	9%	23
Other	6%	17

**Is the federal government doing all it can?**

Yes	15%	34
No	69%	156
Other	16%	35

**Have you ever been contacted by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)?**

Yes	25%	58
No	65%	152
Other	10%	23

**Has the federal government given you specific information about how best to protect your community?**

Yes	27%	61
No	63%	146
Other	10%	23

**Are communication and coordination with the federal government adequate?**

Yes	30%	87
No	56%	159
Other	14%	41

**Do you have enough flexibility to spend federal Homeland Security funds in the best possible manner for local needs?**

Yes	35%	96
No	45%	121
Other	20%	54

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Members of Congress who distributed the survey:**

- Rep. Steny Hoyer (MD)
- Rep. Robert Menendez (NJ)
- Rep. Carolyn Maloney (NY)
- Rep. George Miller (CA)
- Rep. Martin Frost (TX)
- Rep. Alcee Hastings (FL)
- Rep. Rosa DeLauro (CT)
- Rep. Dutch Ruppersberger (MD)
- Rep. John Tierney (MA)
- Rep. Jim Langevin (RI)
- Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (NY)
- Rep. Mark Udall (CO)
- Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton (DC)
- Rep. Bob Etheridge (NC)
- Rep. David Price (NC)
- Rep. Brad Miller (NC)
- Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (TX)
- Rep. Silvestre Reyes (TX)
- Rep. Jan Schakowsky (IL)
- Rep. Vic Snyder (AZ)
- Rep. Gene Green (TX)
- Rep. Charles Gonzales (TX)
- Rep. Edward Markey (MA)

## APPENDIX C

### Breakdown of responses by state:

- **California** – 17
- **Colorado** – 9
- **Washington, D.C.** – 1
- **Florida** – 2
- **Illinois** – 19
- **Indiana** – 1
- **Louisiana** – 1
- **Massachusetts** – 23
- **Maryland** – 22
- **Michigan** – 1
- **North Carolina** – 58
- **Nebraska** – 1
- **New Jersey** – 29
- **New Mexico** – 6
- **New York** – 26
- **Ohio** – 7
- **Oklahoma** – 1
- **Pennsylvania** – 1
- **Puerto Rico** – 1
- **Rhode Island** – 52
- **Texas** – 16
- **Virginia** – 1
- **Vermont** – 9