

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 28, 2005

Secretary Michael Chertoff
United States Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Chertoff,


When New York City was attacked on September 11, 2001, the area's critical communication capabilities were greatly impacted. Severe damage to the critical telecommunications infrastructure made communications virtually impossible resulting in the inability of many people to contact their loved ones and the inability of first responders to communicate with each other. Regrettably, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, damage to the communications networks in the Southern Gulf region resulted in similar communications failures.

In response to the problems that plagued officials and citizens on September 11th, we introduced the "Science and Technology Emergency Mobilization Act," portions of which were adopted by the Homeland Security Act of 2002. Specifically, section 224 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 authorized the Department of Homeland Security to establish a National Emergency Technology Guard, or "NET Guard," comprised of teams of local volunteers with science and technology expertise to assist local communities in responding to attacks on communications and information networks.

At the time, we envisioned NET Guard as a "National Guard" for communications and technology infrastructure where expert volunteers are poised and ready to repair critical telecommunications infrastructure in the case of a disaster. Indeed, after both September 11th and Hurricane Katrina, individuals and companies with expertise did offer their services on an improvised basis. The implementation of NET Guard, however, could greatly increase the effectiveness of these volunteer experts.

Unfortunately, as Hurricane Rita proves, it is inevitable that our nation will face future natural disasters. And as we continue to combat global terrorism, there is the possibility of another terrorist attack. In order to avoid or at least significantly limit communications failures, such as those experienced on September 11th or in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, we urge you and your Department to fully implement NET Guard as soon as possible.

Sincerely,


Senator Ron Wyden


Senator George Allen