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BuildStrong Coalition Member, IBHS, Urges House Committee to Reauthorize National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program

-Legislation would increase awareness of wind-related disasters and effectiveness of strong building codes-

(Washington, DC – June 5, 2012) – The Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS), which is a member of the BuildStrong Coalition, delivered testimony today before the House Science, Space and Technology Subcommittees on Research and Technology urging lawmakers to reauthorize the National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program (NWIP). Ms. Debra Ballen, general counsel and senior vice president for public policy at IBHS, was the witness at the hearing.

H.R. 1786, which was introduced by U.S. Representative Randy Neugebauer (R-TX) would support basic research to better understand windstorms, atmospheric science research and data collection and the development of risk assessment tools and damage mitigation techniques.

Ballen's testimony pointed to research conducted by the Center for American Progress that estimated that from 2011 to 2013, the federal government spent \$136 billion on disaster recovery and relief (much of it attributable to wind events) as a powerful rationale for reauthorizing NWIP. In the past five years alone, there have been more than 7,500 tornadoes reported and 75,000 high wind reports, along with 17 tropical cyclones making landfall in the U.S.

"While every year brings unique weather and other disaster scenarios, the number of extreme weather events causing a billion dollars or more in damage, and the total of those events, has been steadily increasing for the past three decades," Ballen testified. "IBHS strongly agrees with the FEMA Mitigation Framework, which emphasizes that it is critical to identify new ways to stop increasing the trajectory of our risk and start taking steps to reduce it. H.R. 1786 is one such initiative."

Ballen urged committee members to focus on four key areas as they move forward with reauthorization of NWIP.

- *The first should be the development of enhanced understanding of wind events, including better definition of parameters that are important to the design and performance of the built environment.*
- *The second area should be research directed at better understanding and modeling of the interaction of the events with the built environment.*

- *The third area should be research aimed at improving building codes, developing effective mitigation measures and analysis tools to improve design efficiency as well as to assess the benefits of mitigation measures or design requirements on both component and system performance.*
- *The fourth area should be a focus on reviewing current test methods, standards and analytical tools for rating wind resistance in light of recent observations from post-event assessments.*

Ballen's full written testimony is attached to this press release.

Jimi Grande, the chairman of the BuildStrong Coalition, commended IBHS for clearly articulating the reasons Congress should reauthorize NWIP. "Debra Ballen is one of the nation's foremost experts on disaster mitigation. Her testimony today highlighted her deep understanding of wind-related damage and the steps that lawmakers should take to best mitigate it," Grande said.

"BuildStrong is proud to have IBHS as a member and is hopeful that Congress will move forward quickly with a NWIP reauthorization bill that will promote research that will save lives, protect property and reduce taxpayer exposure to natural disasters. We are particularly supportive of efforts to increase research into modern building science, which will be pivotal in promoting the widespread adoption and enforcement of strong building codes."

Grande drew lawmakers' attention to a study conducted by Louisiana State University's Hurricane Center, which found that strong building codes, had they been in widespread use throughout the Gulf region, could have reduced wind damage from Katrina by 80 percent, saving \$8 billion. "When buildings are constructed by using the best practices of modern building science, it is simply harder for the wind to knock them down. We believe reauthorization of NWIP and funding of its important mission will make our nation better prepared to deal with the impact of natural disasters and wind-related damage," Grande concluded.

The Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS) is a 501 (c)(3) organization, wholly supported by the property (re) insurance industry. IBHS conducts objective, scientific research to identify and promote effective actions that strengthen homes, businesses and communities against natural disasters and other causes of loss. IBHS does this by identifying and advocating improved property design, construction, strengthening, maintenance, repair and preparation practices.

BuildStrong is a coalition of national business and consumer organizations, corporations, and emergency management officials dedicated to stronger building codes, in order to protect homes and buildings from the devastation of natural disasters. For a complete list of members and additional information please visit www.BuildStrongAmerica.com.