



Contact: Phil Anderson
(202) 315-5100

BuildStrong Coalition Urges House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to Encourage Adoption of Nationwide Building Codes

(Washington, DC – July 14, 2011) – Lawmakers could help communities recover from major natural disasters while saving taxpayers money by adopting provisions of H.R. 2069, The Safe Building Code Incentive Act, the BuildStrong Coalition said today in testimony submitted to the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management.

“The BuildStrong Coalition commends Chairman Denham and Ranking Member Norton for their work to improve FEMA’s ability to respond to natural disasters,” said coalition Chairman Jimi Grande. “Severe natural catastrophes have already made 2011 the highest loss year for disasters on record. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the victims of these recent tragedies, compelling us to advance legislation to help mitigate future devastation. It is vital that Congress take immediate steps to encourage the adoption of model building codes, a proven and cost effective way to reduce the economic losses of natural disasters.”

Grande pointed to recent studies conducted by FEMA and Louisiana State University’s (LSU) Hurricane Center, which show that investments in pre-storm mitigation and model building codes would have a significant impact in preventing damage from natural disasters. Stronger building codes, the LSU study estimated, would have reduced wind damage from Katrina by as much as 80 percent, saving \$8 billion. Additionally, Grande pointed to a 2005 FEMA-commissioned study that found every dollar invested in pre-storm mitigation resulted in a future benefit of \$4.

“The evidence is overwhelming. Strong building codes save lives, property and taxpayer money,” said Grande. “Despite this correlation, most states have not enacted statewide building codes and related inspection and enforcement measures. The Safe Building Code Incentive Act would encourage states to move forward with the implementation of model building codes that will provide an important first line of defense against future storms.”

Under The Safe Building Code Incentive Act, which was introduced by Congressmen Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL), Albio Sires (D-NJ) and Richard Hanna (R-NY), states that adopt and enforce nationally recognized model building codes for residential and commercial structures would qualify for an additional four percent of funding available for post-disaster grants. The program, which would not require any additional appropriation, since it would draw funds from the existing Disaster Relief Fund, would be administered by FEMA. 16 states currently enforce building codes that would already qualify for the additional four percent funding. Another 15 states would qualify with minor changes to current laws and regulations.

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.