

BRIAN HIGGINS
27TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
BORDER AND MARITIME SECURITY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COUNTERTERRORISM
AND INTELLIGENCE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE
MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM,
NONPROLIFERATION AND TRADE

REVITALIZING OLDER CITIES
TASK FORCE
Co-CHAIR

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3227

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
2459 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3306
(202) 226-0347 (FAX)

WESTERN NEW YORK OFFICES:
LARKIN BUILDING
726 EXCHANGE STREET
SUITE 601
BUFFALO, NY 14210
(716) 852-3501
(716) 852-3929 (FAX)
FENTON BUILDING
2 EAST 2ND STREET
SUITE 300
JAMESTOWN, NY 14701
(716) 484-0729
(716) 484-1049 (FAX)
higgins.house.gov

May 19, 2011

The Honorable Janet Napolitano
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20393

Dear Secretary Napolitano:

I write to express my strong opposition to the removal of the Buffalo-Erie-Niagara Area from the list of high-risk urban areas eligible for FY11 UASI funding.

The Buffalo-Erie-Niagara area has been among the nation's highest-risk urban areas since 2003 because of the threats that it faces, its vulnerability to a terrorist attack, and the consequences of an attack on its numerous assets, resources and critical infrastructure that are tremendously important to the nation.

Buffalo-Erie-Niagara is home to 1.15 million people living in two counties spread over 1,567 square miles. As a northern border community with Canada, Western New York is home to four international bridges; the Peace Bridge, the Rainbow Bridge, the Queenston-Lewiston Bridge and the Whirlpool Bridge. Over 13.8 million commercial and passenger vehicles cross at these locations every year. The Peace Bridge alone represents the busiest passenger crossing at the northern border and transports more than \$30 billion in trade annually. Additionally, Western New York's location along two Great Lakes, Lake Erie and Lake Ontario has made it the major industrial and commercial center of Upstate New York; with approximately 29.19 million tons of goods transported through the region by 683 ocean ships in 2010. The region is also home to the seventh wonder of the world, Niagara Falls, which attracts 13 million annual visitors to the area. This natural wonder's hydroelectric power is harnessed by the Niagara Power Project, and is the biggest electricity producer in New York State.

Moreover, past incidents show that the threat of a terrorist attack is present in the Buffalo-Erie-Niagara region, most notably the "Lackawanna Six" who were convicted of providing material support to Al-Qaeda. The Department of Homeland Security has reported that the terrorist threat on the northern border is higher than the southern border, given its vast porous and maritime landscape. To this end, a December 2010 GAO Report recently warned about the vulnerability of the northern border with only 32 miles out of the 4,000 total miles being secured. In addition,

according to documents obtained from bin Laden's Abbottabad compound, there were reported plans to attack the U.S. rail system and to target smaller American cities.

In light of these risks, now is not the time now to eliminate the eligibility of our threatened urban area from UASI funding. We cannot lay the entire financial burden of securing our cities on local authorities, first responders, law enforcement and agencies and expect to adequately protect our citizens and make our cities safe. States and local budgets are being slashed, and these areas need help shouldering the burden so they may continue to prevent and prepare for terrorist threats.

Thank you for consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,



Brian Higgins
Member of Congress