

October 23, 2005

The Honorable Michael Chertoff  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Chertoff,

Enclosed please find a report on the distribution of FIRE Act Grants for Fiscal Year 2004. As you know, this program was established in 2000 to assist communities with the basic needs of their fire departments, with an emphasis on providing aid to small communities that did not have the financial means necessary to fully support their fire department. After 9/11, the mission of this program forever changed. A homeland security mandate was added to the program and funding was heavily increased. Despite the influx of funding and the program's new mission, a cap of \$750,000 per fire department remained until last year when Congress raised the cap. This new cap allows fire departments that serve more than 1 million people, like the New York City Fire Department, to receive grants up to \$2.75 million. The law that changed the cap also gave you the authority to waive these caps for communities of extraordinary need.

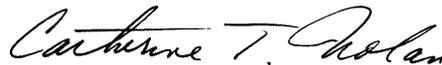
As this report shows, the current manner in which the FIRE Act Grants are being distributed disproportionately favors Republican districts over Congressional districts represented by Democrats. These grants overwhelmingly favor smaller communities at the expense of larger, more populated areas. For example, while Montana received \$7.84 per person in FY2004 funding, New York City only receive 12 cents per capita and Washington, D.C. received nothing. This level of funding is wholly inconsistent with the homeland security funding provided to aid law enforcement agencies in high-threat cities. Additionally, New York City receives an average of 17% of Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) funding over the last three years.

The 9/11 Commission reminded us that "homeland security assistance should be based strictly on an assessment of risks and vulnerabilities." With New York City and Washington, D.C. prohibited from getting any significant funding under the current system, fire departments in our biggest cities are not getting the money they need to prepare for future terrorist attacks. We urge you to reevaluate the funding formula for FIRE Act grants and use the authority given to you by Congress to waive the cap for cities under the greatest threat of a terrorist attack.

Sincerely,



**CAROLYN B. MALONEY**  
Member of Congress



**CATHERINE T. NOLAN**  
Member of New York State Assembly