

**LITTLE HOOVER COMMISSION
THURSDAY, MAY 26, 2005
ROOM 112 – 9:00AM
STATE CAPITOL BUILDING
SENATOR WILLIAM CAMPBELL-RETIRED**

GOOD MORNING. I AM SENATOR WILLIAM CAMPBELL-RETIRED, FORMER CHAIR OF THE CALIFORNIA STATE LEGISLATURE'S JOINT COMMITTEE ON FIRE, POLICE, EMERGENCY & DISASTER SERVICES AND CHAIR OF THE GOVERNOR'S BLUE RIBBON FIRE COMMISSION, WHICH WAS CHARGED WITH REVIEWING THE STATE'S RESPONSE AND PUBLIC POLICIES RELATIVE TO THE DISASTROUS OCTOBER 2003 SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA FIRE SIEGE.

THANK YOU FOR THE INVITATION TO SHARE MY THOUGHTS AND COMMENTS WITH YOU AS THE COMMISSION CONTINUES ITS ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRESS CALIFORNIA HAS MADE IN OUR ABILITY TO RESPOND QUICKLY AND EFFECTIVELY TO NATURAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL DISASTERS. IMPROVING OUR EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND DISASTER RESPONSE CAPABILITY HAS LONG BEEN A SUBJECT TO WHICH I HAVE BEEN COMMITTED AND HAVE CHAMPIONED. I HAVE ALSO COME TO RECOGNIZE THAT IT IS A NEVER ENDING AND EVOLVING PROCESS.

EVERY DISASTER POSES NEW CHALLENGES AND TESTS AND RE-TESTS OUR RESOURCES, RESPONSE STRATEGIES, AND PREPAREDNESS EFFORTS. EACH DISASTER THAT BEFALLS US ALSO PROVIDES US WITH ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND EXPERIENCE FROM WHICH WE CAN LEARN HOW TO FURTHER IMPROVE OUR RESPONSE AND PREPAREDNESS CAPABILITIES.

I MUST COMMEND OUR PUBLIC SAFETY PROFESSIONALS FOR THEIR UNTIRING AND CEASELESS EFFORTS TO LEARN FROM THEIR SUCCESSES AND EXPERIENCES TO FURTHER ENHANCE OUR CAPABILITY TO PROTECT LIFE AND PROPERTY DURING A DISASTER, AS WELL AS TO MITIGATE THE DEVASTING IMPACTS OF FUTURE DISASTERS. EVERY INCIDENT TO WHICH THEY RESPOND BECOMES A LEARNING EXPERIENCE ON HOW TO DO THE NEXT JOB BETTER. THEY ARE THEIR OWN WORSE CRITICS, NEVER BELIEVING THAT THEY CANNOT DO BETTER.

I MUST ALSO COMMEND GOVERNOR SCHWARZENEGGER FOR HIS SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNOR'S BLUE RIBBON FIRE COMMISSION AND HIS COMMITMENT TO IMPROVE CDF'S FIRE PROTECTION RESOURCES AND EQUIPMENT. I AM PLEASED THAT THE RESOURCES AGENCY, CDF, AND OTHERS HAVE BEEN WORKING DILIGENTLY TO ADDRESS THE RECOMMENDATIONS OFFERED BY THE BLUE RIBBON FIRE COMMISSION.

UNFORTUNATELY, WHILE OUR PUBLIC SAFETY PROFESSIONALS STRIVE TO CONSTANTLY IMPROVE THEIR SKILLS AND EFFECTIVENESS, IT HAS BEEN MY EXPERIENCE AS BOTH A PUBLIC SERVANT AND PRIVATE SECTOR BUSINESS PERSON THAT OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS SHY AWAY FROM THE DIFFICULT PUBLIC POLICY DECISIONS THAT WOULD HELP OUR PUBLIC SAFETY PROFESSIONALS TO BETTER PROTECT US.

THUS, IN RESPONSE TO THE COMMISSION'S QUESTION AS TO THE PROGRESS THE STATE HAS MADE IN ENACTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE GOVERNOR'S BLUE RIBBON FIRE COMMISSION REPORT SUBMITTED IN APRIL 2004, I MUST STATE THAT THE PUBLIC SAFETY PROFESSIONALS HAVE ADDRESSED EACH RECOMMENDATION THAT THEY CAN EFFECT AND HAVE MOVED TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATION AS APPROPRIATELY AND EFFECTIVELY AS POSSIBLE. ON THE OTHER HAND THE CALIFORNIA STATE LEGISLATURE CHOSE TO AVOID TACKLING THE TOUGH PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE BLUE RIBBON FIRE COMMISSION.

I MUST REITERATE A KEY BELIEF OF THE GOVERNOR'S BLUE RIBBON FIRE COMMISSION IN ITS RECOGNITION THAT MONEY IS NOT THE ONLY ANSWER TO IMPROVING OUR EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE CAPABILITIES. ELECTED OFFICIALS MUST MAKE PUBLIC POLICY DECISIONS THAT SUPPORT OUR ABILITY TO BETTER PROTECT LIFE AND PROPERTY FROM DISASTERS.

PUBLIC POLICY MANDATES OR LACK OF MANDATES THAT PROHIBIT, IMPEDE OR ENCOURAGE US FROM TAKING APPROPRIATE STEPS TO MITIGATE THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF DISASTERS, ESPECIALLY WILD FIRE RELATED DESTRUCTION, ARE THE REAL BARRIERS TO SIGNFICANTLY REDUCING THE TRAGIC LOSS OF LIFE AND PROPERTY TO DISASTERS.

THEREFORE, WHILE I AM CONFIDENT THAT OUR PUBLIC SAFETY PROFESSIONALS WILL CONTINUAL TO DO EVERYTHING WITHIN THEIR ABILITY TO IMPROVE THEIR SKILLS AND EFFECTIVENESS, I AM LESS CONFIDENT THAT OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS WILL DO EVERYTHING WITHIN THEIR MEANS TO FURTHER PROTECT OUR LIVES AND PROPERTY. HOPEFULLY, THIS COMMISSION WILL ALSO ENCOURAGE OUR STATE AND LOCAL OFFICIALS TO REVIEW ALL CURRENT LAWS AND FUTURE PUBLIC POLICY DECISIONS WITH A COMMITMENT TO MAKING THE PROTECTION OF LIFE AND PROPERTY A PRIORITY.

IN RESPONSE TO THE COMMISSION'S QUESTION AS TO MY PERSONAL HIGHEST PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVING ALL-HAZARDS PREPAREDNESS, I HAVE THREE BRIEF RECOMMENDATIONS. HOWEVER, IN NO WAY DO I WANT YOU TO BELIEVE THAT THESE THREE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THE ANSWER TO IMPROVING OUR EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE CAPABILITY. HOWEVER, I BELIEVE THEY ARE SIGNIFICANT STEPS.

FIRST, MAKE THE PROTECTION OF LIFE AND PROPERTY A PRIORITY. AS ONE EXAMPLE, ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS THAT PROHIBIT OR IMPEDE OUR ABILITY TO REDUCE THE FIRE HAZARD POTENTIAL WILL ENSURE THAT WE WILL EXPERIENCE ANOTHER WILD FIRE DISASTER.

SECOND, AS WE HAVE DONE FOR OUR LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMUNITY BY PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR THE POLICE OFFICERS' STANDARDS & TRAINING PROGRAM, WE MUST ALSO DO FOR OUR FIREFIGHTERS.

THIRD, WE MUST SERIOUSLY ADDRESS THE PROBLEM OF COMMUNICATIONS INTEROPERABILITY TO ENSURE ALL OF OUR PUBLIC SAFETY PROFESSIONALS CAN PERFORM THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES EFFECTIVELY, IN A COORDINATED AND MUTUALLY SUPPORTIVE EFFORT.

IN RESPONSE TO YOUR LAST TWO QUESTIONS REGARDING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES OF STATE PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE AGENCIES, I HAVE THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS.

FIRST, WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE PROPOSED ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE? IS IT TO SAVE MONEY?

IS IT TO ENHANCE COMMUNICATION, COOPERATION, COORDINATION AMONG DIFFERENT PUBLIC SAFETY OR EMERGENCY RESPONSE ORGANIZATIONS?

IS IT TO ACCOMMODATE A PARTICULAR POLITICAL CONSTITUENCY? IS IT TO IMPROVE THE ABILITY OF STATE RESOURCES TO RESPOND TO DISASTERS, OR THE STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS' ABILITIES TO RESPOND TO DISASTERS?

NO DECISION SHOULD BE MADE UNLESS THERE IS A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED AND WHY. ONCE THE WHAT AND WHY ARE IDENTIFIED, THEN THERE MUST BE A BOTTOM UP APPROACH TO IDENTIFYING THE APPROPRIATE ANSWER.

ALL OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY AND FIRST RESPONDER DISCIPLINES THAT WILL BE IMPACTED MUST BE INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS, AS WELL AS OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS.

EVERYONE MUST UNDERSTAND THE RESPONSIBILITIES AND NEEDS OF ONE ANOTHER, AND HOW THEY MUST OPERATE AS A TEAM WHEN RESPONDING TO OR PREPARING FOR DISASTERS. SUCH A PROCESS SHOULD BE FOLLOWED EVEN IF THE ONLY REASON TO RESTRUCTURE THE STATES PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCIES IS TO SAVE STATE MONEY.

I BELIEVE PUBLIC POLICY DECISIONMAKERS MUST FIRST UNDERSTAND THE COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY AND ROLE OF STATE RESOURCES IN PROTECTING CALIFORNIA BEFOR THEY MAKE ANY FINAL DECISION ON HOW TO REORGANIZE THEIR BUREAUCRACY. AND NO DECISION SHOULD BE MADE WITHOUT INVOLVING THOSE WHO WOULD BE IMPACTED BY THE DECISION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL.

THAT CONCLUDES MY COMMENTS. I WOULD BE PLEASE TO ADDRESS ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE.