

Washington, DC – Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D – Ore.) will testify today in support of his bill, H.R. 3524, "The Safe Communities Act," at a hearing of the House Economic Development, Public Building and Emergency Management Subcommittee of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. "The Safe Communities Act," which Blumenauer introduced earlier this year with Rep. Curt Weldon (R-Penn.), would provide grants to states and local communities to help prepare for disasters like Hurricane Katrina.

"The devastation of Hurricane Katrina has presented us with an unprecedented opportunity to focus the spotlight of public attention and political concern on not just doing the best job possible helping the victims of this tragic storm, but making it less likely that others suffer needlessly in the future," Blumenauer said. "While we continue to focus on relief efforts, it is clear that preventing future devastation is the best way to honor the memory of those who have died and respect the losses of the hundreds of thousands of survivors."

Specifically, "The Safe Communities Act" would create a new grant program to support state, local and regional planning activities aimed at reducing threats posed by natural and human-caused disasters. Grant-eligible projects include: comprehensive risk assessment and inventory of critical infrastructure, land-use planning for natural hazards and terrorism security, updating building codes and urban design techniques for risk-reduction.

Blumenauer continued, "The grants authorized by the Safe Communities Act will provide communities the federal tools to plan in a safe and sustainable manner."

Blumenauer gained recent attention as the member of Congress who had repeatedly warned about the disaster waiting to happen in New Orleans. Since coming to Congress in 1996, Blumenauer has become a leader in disaster preparedness, mitigation, and recovery. He also worked for years with former FEMA Director James Lee Witt and former Representative Doug Bereuter (R-Neb.) to craft flood insurance reform that would help make people safer. President Bush signed the "Bunning-Bereuter-Blumenauer Flood Insurance Reform Act" in June, 2004 (P. L. 108-264).