

For additional information: Bill Winter, Director of Communications ♦ (202) 333-0008 Ext. 226

Do FEMA bureaucrats cause more harm than tornadoes, floods, and earthquakes?

WASHINGTON, DC — Disaster Quiz: Which of the following types of “disaster relief” qualify for money from the Federal Emergency Management Agency?

- (a) Moving earthquake victims to more expensive housing, then paying their rent — for the rest of their lives.
- (b) Landscaping privately owned golf courses.
- (c) Paying for snow removal — in June.

“If you guessed all of the above, you’re right,” said Steve Dasbach, Chairman of the Libertarian Party. “They’re all documented examples of FEMA waste — and proof that government disaster relief programs have become another disastrous government boondoggle.”

Dasbach’s comments came as President Clinton was busy handing out millions of dollars in federal aid during his tour of tornado-wracked Arkansas.

“Of course, my heart goes out to people suffering from this natural disaster,” Dasbach said. “But it’s time to admit that government disaster relief programs — and the FEMA bureaucrats who swoop in like vultures after every tornado, earthquake, and flood — are causing more problems than they solve.” Specifically, charged Dasbach:

■ “Politicians are turning disasters into government pork,” he said. “In the last five years, FEMA’s budget soared from \$5 billion to \$13 billion. So FEMA bureaucrats are eagerly searching for new disasters to justify the money. In 1996, for example, the agency declared 75 disasters, or one every five days — the most in history.”

And who gets all this money? Interestingly, the states with the most electoral votes win the most disaster relief, noted Dasbach. Between 1989 and 1994, California, with 54 electoral votes, raked in 55% of all such aid. Florida, with 20 votes, pulled in 20%.

■ “Government disaster relief also encourages people to place themselves in harm’s way — because they know the federal government will rescue them,” said Dasbach. “For example, the endless flow of federal subsidies and low-interest loans has tempted numerous victims of floods, hurricanes and tornadoes to rebuild in disaster-prone areas.”

“Federal disaster relief, while popular with the victims of any particular natural disaster, is harmful to taxpayers, harmful to the people who suffer from disasters, and, in the long run, harmful to the spirit of America, because it discourages neighbors from helping neighbors,” said Dasbach. “Government disaster aid has become a disaster for America. We should end it.”

#