



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senate Passes Emergency Preparedness Package

CATHARINE YOUNG March 22, 2006

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State Senator Catharine "Cathy" Young (R,I,C - Olean) today announced the New York State Senate has passed a comprehensive package of legislation that would greatly enhance the ability of state and local governments, businesses, and New York citizens to prepare and respond to any type of catastrophic event, whether man-made or natural. The legislation would require counties to put preparedness plans into place, establish standards for evacuating and sheltering nursing homes during emergencies, and increasing penalties for individuals who tamper with power plants.

"The lessons of September 11, 2001 and Hurricane Katrina have taught us that we need to be ready for man-made and natural disasters," said Senator Young. "We're taking steps to be ready so we can quickly respond to protect the healthy safety and lives of our people."

The Senate package covers a wide range of disaster preparedness issues, reflecting a shift in the mission of homeland security to an "all-hazards" approach in which localities must be

prepared for all manner of disaster.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PACKAGE OF BILLS

Local Disaster Preparedness Plans – Central to the Senate’s package is legislation to require county governments to put preparedness plans in place now, before disaster strikes. Under current law, it is the responsibility of county governments to develop and implement plans. This new bill would clarify what steps must be put in place to provide optimal protection for New York’s citizens, including, an assessment of the county’s health care infrastructure, an updated roster of volunteer medical personnel, identification of a local stockpile of pharmaceuticals, and a strategy for identifying and coordinating emergency services organizations in the wake of a disaster.

Continuity of Government – Succession to Governor – Would amend the defense emergency act by delineating people eligible to succeed the governor in the event of a man-made or natural disaster, similar to Presidential succession. The legislation also allows for the filing of interim vacancies in the state Legislature due to disasters.

Civil Liability for Falsely Reporting an Incident – (S.1568) Would establish restitution in the event a person or government entity has been convicted of falsely reporting an incident involving the use of hazardous substances or materials. This type of compensation was designed for local governments throughout the state that have been victimized by false reports of hazardous substances.

Standards for Nursing Homes During Times of Disaster – (S.6912) Would require the state Office of Homeland Security, in conjunction with the state Department of Health, to develop standards for nursing homes on what to do during a disaster emergency. This includes

standards for food and water, keeping generators and staffing levels during the disaster. During Hurricane Katrina, several people died at St. Rita's nursing home when the power went out and staff didn't show up.

Protecting Against Terrorism – (S.5605) Would create new crimes and increase penalties for activities tied to terrorism including: agricultural and biological terrorism, cyber-terrorism and computer tampering, impersonating a pilot or member of a flight crew, and money laundering in support of terrorist activities. The bill would also give law enforcement the resources they need to properly investigate and prosecute individuals involved in terrorist activity.

The bills were sent to the Assembly.