



New Mexico State Senate

State Capitol
Santa Fe

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February 21, 2018

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The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Re: Northeastern New Mexico Regional First Responders Training Facility

Dear Secretary Nielsen:

I am writing to seek your advice and federal support for the establishment of a regional first responders training facility to be located in Las Vegas, New Mexico. I have seen firsthand the need for increased first responder training for rural areas of our country. New Mexico Senate District 8, which I represent, spans seven counties that comprise most of northeastern New Mexico (14,620 square miles) and includes 14 incorporated municipalities and all or parts of 19 different school districts. The emergency services and first responders that serve the population of this dispersed, rural area are, for the most part, volunteers who struggle to find adequate funding and training to fulfill their mission.

I envision a regional first responders training center to be established on the campus of Luna Community College in Las Vegas, New Mexico. Luna Community College already has the instructional staff and facilities to construct and maintain necessary training facilities and emergency vehicles and equipment. Adjacent to the college campus and a New Mexico National Guard detachment are 200 acres that could be used for field exercises and equipment testing, including a shooting range.

The regional training center would be primarily available to first responders and emergency personnel from throughout the Southwest. The training curriculum could include methods to protect against and resolve terrorist activity in rural areas; battling forest fires with strategic methods aimed at protecting watersheds that provide water supplies to small, semiarid communities; strategies for emergency medical technicians to respond to frontier (rural) emergencies; and methods for law enforcement officers in small, isolated rural communities to respond to school emergencies. There is no question

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that protocols for first responders and other emergency services personnel in rural and sometimes isolated communities are significantly different than for those responding in urban areas with a wide variety of readily accessible resources.

While facilities such as the Center for Domestic Preparedness in Anniston, Alabama, and the National Emergency Training Center in Emmitsburg, Maryland, provide valuable training opportunities, they are not geared to the rural and sometimes arid environment of much of the nation west of the Mississippi River. A regional first responders training center based in Las Vegas, New Mexico, could provide much more relevant training for professionals and volunteers working in the Southwest. In many ways, a regional first responders training center based in Las Vegas could serve a function similar to that of the Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers facility in Artesia, New Mexico.

A regional first responders training center in Las Vegas would be an essential rural component of our national Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) initiative. Although emphasis might be on trainees from Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and Utah and eastern portions of California, Oregon and Washington, a rural training initiative could be valuable for trainees from throughout the country. Prospective courses at the Las Vegas facility could supplement current first responder training conducted at the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology in cooperation with FEMA, as well as courses offered by FEMA's Center for Domestic Preparedness, Emergency Management Institute and National Training and Education Division.

The establishment of a regional first responders training center in Las Vegas would be a major step forward in FEMA's National Training Program and in implementing its National Preparedness Guidelines, and it would provide an opportunity to coordinate federal, state and local efforts and funding to improve rural emergency preparedness and save lives in rural America.

Thank you for considering my initiative, and please feel free to contact me should you have any comments or questions. I look forward to your response and to working with you, the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA in addressing the emergency preparedness needs of rural America.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "PETE CAMPOS", enclosed within a hand-drawn oval border.

PETE CAMPOS

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cc: United States Senator Tom Udall
United States Senator Martin T. Heinrich
United States Representative Ben R. Luján
New Mexico Governor Susana Martinez
Secretary M. Jay Mitchell, New Mexico Homeland Security and
Emergency Management Department

PC:clm