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COMMISSIONER ELLIS CALLS FOR STRONG FEMA PARTNERSHIP WITH HARRIS COUNTY AND EQUITABLE, COORDINATED DISASTER RESPONSE

AS HOUSTON PREPARES TO HOST 2026 FIFA WORLD CUP EVENTS, ELLIS WARNS THAT FEDERAL CUTS AND DELAYED RECOVERY DOLLARS THREATEN FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES STILL LIVING WITH FLOOD RISK

HARRIS COUNTY — Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis testified today on emergency preparedness, response, and recovery in advance of Hurricane Season and FIFA World Cup events alongside other local leaders at a House Committee on Homeland Security fact-finding forum at NRG Center hosted by Congressman Al Green. Also attending was Homeland Security Committee Ranking Member, Congressman Bennie G. Thompson.

Participants discussed the importance of public safety coordination, emergency response planning, flood mitigation, infrastructure resilience, and the lessons learned from past disasters, including Hurricane Harvey.

See full participant testimonies [here, including Commissioner Ellis' remarks at the 12:55 mark.](#)

Statement from Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis:

“Harris County knows what it means to live with disaster risk. Counties are on the front line when storms hit, coordinating first responders, distributing life-saving resources,

and facilitating critical evacuation operations. Yet we cannot do this work alone. When federal support is delayed or cut, local governments are forced to front millions in disaster recovery costs, leaving fewer dollars for healthcare, housing, public safety, infrastructure and other services that communities with less resources rely on. FEMA must be strong, staffed, and ready to respond so that these same communities are not left behind again and again."

In addition to the forum, the congressional fact-finding mission included visits to the Texas Medical Center, and areas in Meyerland and Brays Bayou that have been affected by repeated flooding.

Over the last decade, Harris County has experienced an increasing number of major disasters—such as the Tax Day Flood, Hurricane Harvey, and Hurricane Beryl—that have exposed long-standing inequities in flood protection, infrastructure investment, and disaster recovery.

Houston's World Cup planning at the onset of hurricane season has added complexity and made the situation much more urgent. With hundreds of thousands of visitors expected in the region during hurricane season, federal, state, county, city, nonprofit and private-sector partners face the unique challenge of coordinating as visitors crowd the city.

In the face of these already significant challenges, FEMA cuts will deeply impact Texas' ability to respond, leaving Harris County more vulnerable to extreme disasters and other effects of climate change. Worse, communities with less resources will be hit hardest.

After Hurricane Harvey, Commissioner Ellis championed equity guidelines for Harris County's 2018 Flood Bond Program to ensure flood control investments were not driven only by property values, but also by people's vulnerability, flood risk, and ability to recover. Those equity guidelines were designed to correct a basic injustice: communities with the greatest need should not be last in line for protection because they have lower property values or less political power.

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About the Office of Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis:

A longtime civil rights leader with more than four decades of public service, Commissioner Rodney Ellis represents Harris County Precinct One, a diverse, 365-square-mile region in the nation's third-largest county. Under Commissioner Ellis' leadership, the office champions purpose-driven public service to improve quality of life, build thriving communities, and advance opportunity, equity, and justice for all. Precinct One is home to more than 1.2 million residents, over 8,500 acres of greenspace, and major regional assets including the Texas Medical Center, George Bush Intercontinental Airport, leading sports and entertainment venues, several Fortune 500 headquarters, and all of Houston's major institutions of higher learning. For more information, visit www.hcp1.net.

ABOUT THE OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER RODNEY ELLIS

The Office of Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis is committed to championing purpose driven public service to improve quality of life, build thriving communities, and advances opportunity, equity, and justice for all.

CONTACT DETAILS

The Office of County Commissio...

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