

COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548



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MAY 24 1977

The Honorable Abraham Ribicoff
Chairman, Committee on Governmental
Affairs
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On April 6, 1977, you asked for our views and recommendations on Senate bill 1209. The bill proposes to consolidate the functions of, and thereby increase the efficiency and coordination of, the Defense Civil Preparedness Agency (DCPA), the Federal Preparedness Agency (FPA), the Federal Disaster Assistance Administration (FDAA), the Office of Industrial Mobilization, and the General Services Administration's stockpile elements. We have reviewed the bill and have no major objections to it.

As you know, we have recently completed a review of DCPA, FPA, and FDAA. A copy of our draft report entitled "Civil Preparedness of the Federal, State, and Local Governments," was provided to you on January 10, 1977. In our draft report, we pointed out the need for better coordination among the preparedness agencies and therefore support the bill's unified and comprehensive approach to all preparedness planning.

Set forth below are some of our observations on the bill's provisions.

- Permanent membership of the Director, Federal Emergency Assistance and Preparedness Administration, on the National Security Council should help to strengthen civil preparedness by tying it more closely to total national defense planning and priority setting. However, removing DCPA from the Department could adversely affect the civil defense program since defense resources would be less available to the program.
- Having the new Administration serve as a single point of contact for State and local emergency matters should improve Federal-State-local cooperation. As our draft

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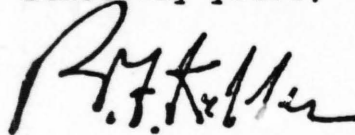
report pointed out, we found confusion at the State level in having to deal with three Federal agencies.

--Reinstating the delegate agency concept, in which the Director of the new Administration would have budgetary and supervisory control over the many preparedness offices listed in Executive Order 11490, should strengthen executive branch oversight and control of the various operations on which the Nation's survival and recovery depend. We are currently reviewing the effectiveness of planning and coordinating these operations, to determine whether the Nation can continue to function during and after a major emergency, such as a nuclear attack. Early indications are that many agencies give low priority to such planning and that coordination between the public and private sectors should be improved.

--The bill's provision for amending the Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950 to allow dual-purpose preparedness planning is a needed clarification. We fully support the concept of dual-purpose planning for both wartime and peacetime disasters.

In considering Senate bill 1209, the Committee may wish to address another question not covered in the bill. That is, can a civil preparedness program in which State, local, and industrial participation is voluntary be fully effective? Our draft report discussed some of the problems resulting from voluntary participation which the Committee may wish to consider. We will send you a copy of our final report as soon as it is finalized.

Sincerely yours,



Deputy Comptroller General
of the United States