

## April 24, 2008: National Urban Search and Rescue Authorization Act

The Honorable Loretta Sanchez

### NATIONAL URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE AUTHORIZATION ACT

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Madam Speaker, every day and every night firefighters, police officers, and other first responders keep our communities safe and are ready to respond to emergencies as they arise.

Among all of the dedicated first responders in our cities and towns, several local agencies have taken their commitment a step further by sponsoring Urban Search and Rescue Task Forces. There are 28 Urban Search and Rescue Task Forces around the country, including one in my own district, sponsored by the Orange County Fire Authority.

These task forces stand ready to respond to natural disasters like earthquakes and hurricanes, and to terrorist attacks. For example, FEMA deployed 25 of the 28 on 9/11, and 28 of the 28 task forces to Hurricane Katrina.

Despite the fact that these task forces are deployed by FEMA, they have not been authorized by the Congress and as a result, the task force members are not eligible for Federal disability or death benefits if they are injured while federally deployed.

I have introduced H.R. 4183, the National Urban Search and Rescue Response System Act of 2007, which could give them the protections that they deserve. I hope all Members will join me in moving this legislation forward.