



WISCONSIN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION, INC.

June 30, 2005

Senator Russell Feingold
506 Hart Senate Building
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Herbert H. Kohl
330 Hart Senate Building
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Tammy Baldwin
1022 Longworth House Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Paul Ryan
1113 Longworth House Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Ronald Kind
1406 Longworth House Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Gwen Moore
1408 Longworth House Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Representative F. James Sensenbrenner
2449 Rayburn House Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Thomas Petri
2462 Rayburn House Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Representative David Obey
2314 Rayburn House Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Mark Green
1314 Longworth House Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators and Representatives:

The Wisconsin Emergency Management Association (WEMA) represents nearly 200 emergency managers and their partners throughout the State of Wisconsin. We are writing to express our opposition to S 786 which would change the public safety partnership we share with the National Weather Service (NWS).

Emergency Managers in Wisconsin have worked very hard to build strong relationships with the NWS. This bill would dramatically change the way the NWS provides us with the vital information that we need in order to make informed decisions about the safety and welfare of our citizens.

We agree that private sector weather forecasters have a right to earn money, but this should be for services above and beyond what the NWS offers. We need direct access to the data gathered by the NWS in order to make decisions that affect life safety and property conservation. This access cannot be limited to the communities that can afford to pay for private sector services.

Private forecasters have argued that there is "unfair" competition from the NWS. They state that local emergency managers decline to purchase private services because they can go directly to the NWS. They are correct. During severe weather we are often in direct contact with the NWS to gather important life safety information.

We will be following this bill very closely as it moves through Congress and we would encourage you to do the same. Please keep in mind the importance of the relationships we have established and don't treat local governments unfairly or jeopardize their citizens by requiring them to use local tax dollars to gain access to information already collected and paid for by the American taxpayers.

Sincerely,

Cullen Peltier
President, WEMA