

Chronological: Senate Commerce, Science, Transport Hearing on S. 1043, Natural Disaster Protection and Insurance Act, 1996-07-18

Senator Daniel K. Inouye Papers
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**STATEMENT BY
SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUE**

**Hearing before the Senate
Committee on Commerce,
Science and Transportation
on S. 1043, the
Natural Disaster Protection
and Insurance Act
July 18, 1996**

Mr. Chairman: Many of you know that I have had a long-standing interest in improving the way we plan for and respond to natural disasters. In my home state of Hawaii, we have lived through such events and understand the need to better prepare for their inevitable return.

Because of these threats, I introduced the original Natural Disaster Protection Act in the last Congress. The Commerce Committee held two hearings and, at that time, I decided to accommodate the Administration's request for more time to develop an alternative disaster plan,

and defer my efforts to have this bill reported by the Commerce Committee.

This Congress, I joined Senator Stevens as an original cosponsor of a similar bill. S. 1043 would reform federal disaster policies which address mitigation and insurance.

Last fall, the Committee held a hearing on S. 1043, to examine ways in which to improve our nation's response to natural disasters.

Today, the Committee will examine substitute legislation to S. 1043.

This substitute bill was developed after Senator Stevens convened a series of meetings involving insurers, consumer groups, emergency management officials, and many others.

The meetings provided interested parties with an opportunity to voice their concerns and provide input in the development of the substitute Natural Disaster Protection and Insurance Act.

This substitute bill will not completely solve the availability problem of disaster insurance, especially in Hawaii's high risk areas, nor will it eliminate the federal burden of disaster relief.

However, I believe our substitute bill is an appropriate and needed first step on which to build future efforts to provide affordable disaster relief coverage.

I hope that my Senate colleagues will join Senator Stevens and me in supporting this substitute bill. We cannot sit back and wait. Hurricane Bertha is just a taste of what could come in the months ahead.

Do we need 100 more disasters or can we begin the process? Something must be done, because the longer we sit around, lives may be ruined, fortunes may be destroyed and cities may be demolished.

I commend Senator Stevens on his diligent efforts and pledge to work with him in having this bill favorably reported by the Commerce Committee. I welcome our witnesses today and look forward to hearing your testimony.