



Senate Transportation Committee

Senator Roger Madigan

Chairman

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Senator Madigan Opening Remarks

Good Afternoon and thank all of you for coming today. The winter storm that may forever be referred to as the Pennsylvania Valentine's Day massacre stands out as a very big black eye on the face of Pennsylvania state government.

A Government that in the past has performed so well during all types of disasters. The storms of 1994 and 1996, the Hurricane Ivan wind and flood damage and even the floods of this past summer in Northeast Pennsylvania are all examples of how well we can do.

The storm that faced us was one of unusual complexity and variety statewide. Thankfully, it was a very rare storm.

Unfortunately, it pinpoints how unprepared we can be in certain situations and how important it is to communicate and coordinate at every level to protect the citizens of the Commonwealth.

Pennsylvania has a long track record of dealing with disasters from floods to hurricanes to tornados and certainly in dealing with winter storms. Each provided different challenges and each one is supposed to help us be better prepared for the next challenge.

We were NOT prepared for this event in any way that was satisfactory to me.

We did not learn how vital communications is to dealing with disasters and we did not learn how important a unified command is in disaster relief.

Every one of us as a Pennsylvanian was embarrassed by how our state government performed.

I would like to thank the people who have provided us with their input through emails and phone calls this week. It paints a grim picture of the confidence in state government. But it also gives us a place to start to do better. The Citizens of Pennsylvania have much greater appreciation for what needs to be done than they are given credit for, and I for one am grateful for their input.

I do not care one bit about assessing blame for the state's response to this storm to a handful of state employees or to any of you here before us. I am NOT looking for someone's head or for a sacrificial lamb!

I want what every Pennsylvanian wants-to be confident that our state is prepared to deal with emergencies of all kinds and that we will be well served by those who are responsible to ensure that we are prepared.

Thank you.