

Department of Homeland Security and Operation HOPE, Inc., Formalize Partnership in HOPE Coalition America

Release Date: 01/21/04 00:00:00

For Immediate Release

Office of the Press Secretary

January 21, 2004

WASHINGTON, DC -- The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Los Angeles-based Operation HOPE, Inc., signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) today initiating a new financial advisory service to enhance the recovery process for those affected by natural disasters and national emergencies. The joint venture was established last November when thousands of Californians faced economic uncertainty as a result of the wildfires that devastated Southern California.

"The Department of Homeland Security and FEMA are committed to accessing every available public and private means to support those impacted by natural disasters and emergencies," said Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge. "Operation HOPE is one of the nation's leading efforts in promoting economic literacy, and we are pleased that these private sector leaders are making their expertise available to people in times of need."

Under the new agreement between Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and HOPE Coalition America, disaster victims who contact FEMA following a Presidentally-declared disaster or emergency will be directed to HOPE Coalition America to receive free financial counseling.

"The United States has the world's strongest network of first responders to the immediate health, safety and infrastructure needs after disasters, and HOPE Coalition America will make it even stronger by working to address the economic and financial challenges of communities that are devastated by disasters," said John Bryant, founder of Operation HOPE and HOPE Coalition America. "Working in partnership with government, community, and the private sector, we will help restore the faith and rebuild the lives of families and small businesses who suffer economically from natural disasters and national emergencies."

HOPE Coalition America brings together senior executives and professionals from the financial services and legal industries, as well as higher education, social service and community development providers, to provide free, financial and economic counseling to those affected by natural disasters, national emergencies and economic disasters.

People affected by natural disasters or national emergencies can also contact HOPE Coalition America by calling (888) 388-HOPE or by visiting [HOPE Coalition America](#).

HOPE Coalition America HOPE Corps members will act as caseworkers, providing services that focus on general economic literacy and other finance-related issues. HOPE Corps members will also guide individuals through the process of maintaining or regaining control of their financial lives. HOPE Coalition America counseling services include:

- Emergency Budget Counseling
- Emergency Credit Management
- Accessing Emergency Mortgage Assistance
- Assistance with Working With Your Creditors
- One on One Emergency Economic Counseling
- Referrals to Government and Private Agencies
- Economic Disaster Literacy
- Assistance with Obtaining Copies of Destroyed Financial Documents

In addition, when disasters strike and presidential declarations are made, FEMA provides advisory services that include crisis counseling for those traumatized by the disaster, income tax assistance for filing casualty losses, and advisory assistance for legal, veterans benefits and social security matters.

HOPE Coalition America was created as a national emergency economic response initiative to provide "economic triage" to those affected by the tragedy of September 11, 2001. HOPE Coalition America and its private sector, government and community partners have assisted more than 1,000 people from 125 cities in 35 states, and have provided one-on-one economic counseling to almost 700 people nationwide.

Operation HOPE is a national non-profit self-help organization working to bring economic self-sufficiency to inner-city residents. With more than \$180 million in outstanding commitments from its 115 bank and corporate partners for homeownership and small business loans, \$114 million in funded loans and over 575,000 customers served in economic literacy, education and related services, Operation HOPE is a national leader in providing economic empowerment tools and services.

HOPE Coalition America partners include Wells Fargo & Co., Hawthorne Savings Bank, SBC Communications, Saatchi & Saatchi Los Angeles, Mannatt, Phelps and Phillips, LLP, State Farm Insurance, Union Bank of California, Far East National Bank, Chrisman & Company, Clear Channel Outdoor, FleetBoston Financial, Kaiser Federal Bank, Imperial Credit//TLA Capital, Leo A. Daly, Israel Discount Bank, Pebble Beach Company, Premier Radio Networks, True Interactive, and the United Way of Greater Los Angeles. Hope Coalition America is also endorsed by America's Community Bankers, Banco Popular North America, California Bankers Association, Citibank, Consumers Bankers Association, E* TRADE Financial, Harbor Bank of Maryland, Independent Community Bankers Association, Microsoft, New York Bankers Association, Oregon Bankers Association, The Hartford, Union Bank of California, and Wescom Credit Union.

On March 1, 2003, FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. FEMA's continuing mission within the new department is to lead the effort to prepare the nation for all hazards and effectively manage federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates proactive mitigation activities, trains first responders, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration.