

WASHINGTON (October 5) – Congressman Robert Aderholt (AL-4) and Congressman Spencer Bachus (AL-6) said today they have been informed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) that it will not force the demolition of emergency storm shelters at schools in Alabama.

FEMA officials told Congressmen Aderholt and Bachus that they have developed a plan for school administrators that will enable them to acquire the structures and keep them open to protect students and citizens in the community. FEMA is contacting the schools to discuss details of the proposal, but the congressmen said they have been assured by representatives of FEMA Director Craig Fugate that there is no threat of storm shelters being torn down or moved.

“After discussions with FEMA and local officials regarding current storm shelter policy, I’m pleased we are working toward a common sense solution that will benefit our students, communities and taxpayers. FEMA and Administrator Fugate stepped up to the plate, ensuring that the bureaucratic process not stand in the way of safety,” said Congressman Aderholt, who is Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security.

“It never made sense to tear down perfectly good storm shelters, and it’s a relief that option is totally off the table. Ensuring that storm shelters are available to protect our children and citizens has been an even greater priority for Alabama since the deadly tornadoes this spring. The focus should be on safety and that’s what the regulations should reflect,” said Congressman Bachus, who introduced a bill on September 14 to prevent the removal or demolition of the storm shelters.

Under existing FEMA policy, storm shelters built with FEMA funds to serve portable classrooms can be potentially be torn down or removed once damaged schools have been repaired or replaced. While the structures can be purchased from FEMA at “fair market” rates, the cost is prohibitive for school systems already dealing with storm-related expenses.

The policy came under sharp criticism from school officials and communities faced with losing a newly-built and fully functioning storm shelter.