

WASHINGTON (October 14) – Congressman Spencer Bachus (AL-6) said his legislation to prevent the removal or demolition of storm shelters built to protect school children in Alabama has been passed by a key congressional committee.

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee unanimously approved Bachus' Community Shelter Protection Act of 2011 yesterday. The bill would prevent the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) from ordering schools to dispose of storm shelters built to serve temporary classrooms after the devastating tornadoes in Alabama this past April. Schools and communities would be allowed to keep the shelters in operation.

Since the introduction of the bill, FEMA officials have provided a verbal assurance to Congressman Bachus that they will not force the razing of the safe rooms and will work with school administrators on a plan to keep the shelters open to protect children and citizens in the community.

“FEMA deserves credit for addressing the immediate problem in Alabama by correcting a misguided regulation. That has always been my preferred result. My legislation remains important for public policy purposes by setting a precedent that communities and states should never be put in such a dilemma. Taxpayer money was used to build these storm shelters and it would be a waste of taxpayer money and a risk to lives to immediately turn around and tear the shelters down,” said Congressman Bachus.

The original FEMA regulation forced cash-strapped schools to choose between purchasing or selling the storm shelters, or potentially having them removed or demolished.

All Members of the Alabama House delegation were original cosponsors of the bill. A date for consideration on the House floor has not yet been scheduled.