





## **Contents**

1. Summary.....	3
2. Organizational Overview.....	3
3. Letter from the Chair.....	4
4. Biannual Meetings.....	5
5. High Profile Events and Major Accomplishments.....	6
6. Federal Engagement.....	6
7. Preventing Targeted Violence Survey Results.....	7
8. Written Products: Quarterly Memos	
8.1. Access and Functional Needs Considerations For COVID-19 Response and Recovery Planning.....	8
8.2. Gubernatorial Considerations for Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) Implementation.....	8
8.3. Operational Coordination for COVID-19 Response and Recovery.....	9
8.4. Mass Fatality Management.....	9

## **Summary**

---

The Governors Homeland Security Advisors Council (GHSAC or Council) 2020 Annual Report will provide an overview of the Council's work in the past year, including meetings, work products, and significant accomplishments.

### **Organizational Overview**

GHSAC serves as a forum through which Homeland Security Advisors (HSAs) connect and collaborate with their peers in other states, commonwealths, territories, and Washington, D.C., engage senior officials, and stay apprised of new and emerging threats to the homeland. Key GHSAC objectives include:

- Improving interstate and regional communication;
- Facilitating coordination between state and federal agencies; and
- Developing a unified state and territorial voice to inform Governors and the National Governors Association of the impacts that federal homeland security legislation, regulations, and policies have on the states.

### **Thank You to our 2020 Executive Committee**

- Chair: A.J. Gary, Arkansas
- Vice Chair: Lt. Col. Chris Kelenske, Michigan
- Brad Richy, Idaho
- Brian Moran, Virginia
- Gilbert Orrantia, Arizona
- Pete Landon, Maryland
- Mark Ghilarducci, California
- Kevin Klein, Colorado

## Letter from the Chair

Dear Friends and Colleagues,



Serving as the Chair of the Governors Homeland Security Council (“GHSAC”) has been one of my proudest accomplishments. The role and importance of homeland security advisors have been emphasized now more than ever, and it has been an honor to be at the helm of this Council.

Thinking back to our 2020 Winter Meeting in Hawai‘i, no one would have expected our meeting to be a preview of the challenges ahead of us—from the COVID-19 pandemic, civil unrest, threats to our State Capitals and elected officials, and the list goes on. Our meetings continue to be an essential forum for us to discuss emerging threats to our states and territories and share best practices. Your knowledge and leadership have never been more critical in helping your Governor and our nation during this time.

As we enter the new year, we have many challenges ahead, including continuing to distribute vaccines and mass vaccination, persistent threats of domestic terrorism and cybersecurity, and the regular show of natural and human-made disasters. As homeland security advisors, protecting health and safety is chief among our responsibilities. I hope you can turn to the GHSAC as your professional community of practice to navigate these challenges. The effectiveness of the GHSAC is strengthened when we all work together to advance our respective homeland security missions.

This annual report highlights the accomplishments and the tremendous work we have done in service to our Governors and country. I look forward to our continued partnership and service.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A.J. Gary'.

A.J. Gary  
Director of Emergency Management &  
Homeland Security Advisor  
State of Arkansas

## **Biannual Meetings**

The GHSAC meets twice a year to discuss challenges, share best practices, and establish Council priorities. These meetings also provide a platform to receive briefings on emerging threats, changes in Federal posture, and trends across the Homeland Security enterprise.

The 2020 Winter Meeting kicked off with a warm welcome from Governor David Ige on January 28-30, 2020 in Honolulu, Hawai'i. The GHSAC members had the opportunity to discuss the status of current events, program priorities, and federal/state engagement for preventing targeted violence with senior U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) leadership. Other discussions included programmatic priorities with DHS and FEMA, counter UAS policy, cybersecurity, civil unrest, and innovations in homeland security technology. Hawai'i senior officials highlighted their response to the 2018 Kilauea Volcano eruption and received a presentation from the Hawai'i threat assessment team. The convening concluded with a site visit to Pearl Harbor and the U.S.S. Arizona National Monument.



The 2020 Summer Meeting was held virtually from July 13-17, 2020. Members of the GHSAC received a briefing from Acting Secretary Chad Wolf and Assistant Secretary John Hill from DHS. Additional briefings included federal strategy for targeted violence and prevention from the Office of Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention; updates on cybersecurity and election security from U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA); and preparing for and additional considerations for the continued COVID-19 operations from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

## **High Profile Events and Major Accomplishments**

The Seminar for New Homeland Security Advisors convened new advisors in Washington, D.C., on March 12, 2020, to discuss best practices with their peers on strategies for succeeding in their new role. New HSA's also met with senior leadership from DHS, FEMA, and Center for Homeland Defense and Security.

The GHSAC along with the National Emergency Management Agency and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, serve as Tri-Chairs as a Joint Policy Work Group. The Work Group met on December 3, 2020, to discuss the COVID-19 pandemic. The Work Group discussed current and ongoing COVID-19 response efforts with representatives from the CDC and discussed the utilization of the National Guard for vaccine distribution, and the importance of developing a cohesive and collaborative national response.

The GHSAC also contributed to the Atlantic's Council [\*Future of DHS Project: Key Finds and Recommendations\*](#). The publication identifies key recommendations and findings on the direction of the DHS's mission and how to address future department challenges.

## **Federal Engagement**

On March 10-11, 2020, the GHSAC held its fourth annual "fly-in" for the Executive Committee in Washington, D.C. Committee members met with senior leadership from the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations, the House Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Relations, CISA Department of Energy, Federal Bureau of Investigations, and the National Security Council.



Committee members advocated for the GHSAC priorities and provided information on their COVID-19 response efforts, the importance of dedicated FEMA grants for cybersecurity and resilience, and the status of preventing targeted violence threats, C-UAS, and school safety.

### **Preventing Targeted Violence Survey Results**

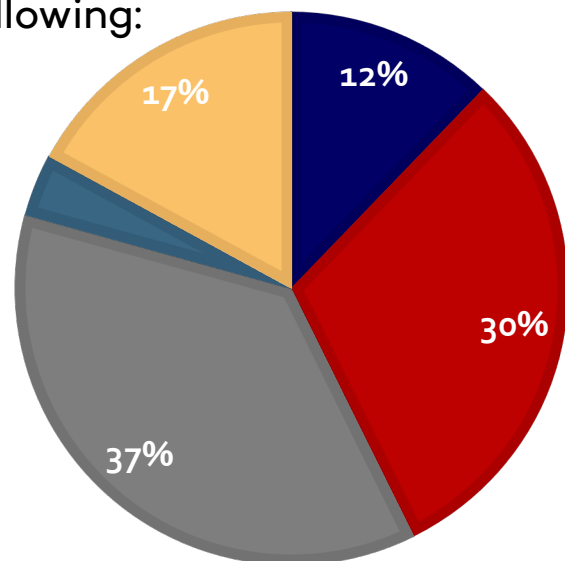
In 2019, the GHSAC members were surveyed on their state’s approach to preventing targeted violence (PTV). The survey’s goal was to provide HSA’s with a better understanding of other states’ strategy, emerging programs, obstacles, as well as advancing conversation around the issue.

#### **Key findings:**

- Most states have programs that address PTV in some capacity, although 11 percent of all respondents reported having no program to address PTV at all.
- The majority of programs are managed by State Law Enforcement of Homeland Security Agencies.
- The majority of states list resource shortages (specifically funding) as the limit to PTV program development.
- Across the board, PTV program maturity is rated as 6.3 on a scale of 1-10.

My state-level PTV efforts would be enhanced if there was a larger federal investment the following:

- Community Engagement
- Technical Assistance and Training
- Grant Support
- Philanthropic Engagement
- Tech Sector Engagement



## **Written Products: Quarterly Memos**

### **[Access and Functional Needs Considerations For COVID-19 Response and Recovery Planning](#)**

The COVID-19 pandemic presents unique challenges for individuals with temporary or permanent challenges accessing or receiving medical care, support services and/or accommodations before, during, or after a public health emergency. These individuals have existing needs to be considered in emergency response and recovery plans and may be disproportionately impacted by the pandemic (e.g., increased risk for infection, morbidity, and mortality depending on their current circumstances). In addition, emergency response activities and mitigation policies themselves may inadvertently create new disruptions to accessing care and supports for this population.

### **[Gubernatorial Considerations for Continuity of Operations Plan \(COOP\) Implementation](#)**

Pandemics, emergencies, and other catastrophic events require Governors and state and territory leaders to consider how they will continue to operate and deliver core services to the public. Spurred by the events of 9/11, COOP planning describes the Mission Essential Functions (MEFs) of a state or territory government and the process for preserving and maintaining them in an emergency. In the context of COVID-19, Governors should consider which government services should be sustained in the face of social distancing demands, potential reductions in staff due to illness, and supply chain interruptions. Reducing the number of services provided by a government does not indicate failure; instead, it allows governments to prioritize physical, human, and financial resources to support, sustain, and sometimes enhance MEFs and emergency operations. For instance, records management personnel may be moved from a shuttered (temporarily closed) DMV to support state hospital administration. Implementation of COOP plans allows Governors and state governments to continue the purpose of their public services and mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on residents.



### Operational Coordination for COVID-19 Response and Recovery

As the COVID-19 pandemic grows in scale and complexity, so does the number of state, federal, local, nonprofit, and private assets deployed to respond. Governors play an important role in ensuring these partners can, and are, working together to define strategies and achieve goals. This operational coordination enables unity of effort, reduces misuse, errors, and duplication of activity, and optimizes the amount of human, physical, and financial resources available for various missions. To be effective, operational coordination will need to be applied across all phases of the COVID-19 crisis lifecycle, from immediate response and long-term recovery to mitigation of future outbreaks.

### Gubernatorial Considerations for Mass Fatality Management

With widespread infection and a mortality rate of 3-4 percent, COVID-19 has the potential to put significant strain on the ability of hospitals and the mortuary community to process decedents and support their families respectfully. The pandemic will cause morgues and mortuaries to reach capacity quickly, and governors should be prepared to support their state's implementation of a mass fatality management plan. Governors can take many actions to support the compassionate, dignified, and expeditious processing of remains depending on existing authorities and flexibilities. For a copy of the memo, please contact Michelle Woods at [mwoods@nga.org](mailto:mwoods@nga.org).



NATIONAL  
**GOVERNORS**  
ASSOCIATION

Michelle Woods  
Program Director  
Homeland Security Program  
National Governors Association  
[Mwoods@nga.org](mailto:Mwoods@nga.org)

Carl Amritt  
Senior Policy Analyst  
Homeland Security Program  
National Governors Association  
[Camritt@nga.org](mailto:Camritt@nga.org)

Lacy Adams  
Policy Coordinator  
National Governors Association  
[Ladams@nga.org](mailto:Ladams@nga.org)

*The GHSAC Annual Report is made possible (in part) with funding from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.*