

# REGION 2 BI-WEEKLY

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## REGION LOSES IT'S 'SAGE' *Nestor Llamas Passes Away While Deployed*



Nestor Llamas, 79, External Affairs' Congressional lead and an agency "sage," died while deployed on DR-1857 in Albany Thursday, following a heart attack.

Nestor was the mainstay of External Affairs' Congressional Relations cadre since 1996. He worked 63 disasters nationally — including 9/11 and in the Commonwealth of Rota, Northern Mariana Islands in 2002-2003 — and taught more than 63 Congressional liaison courses, many at EMI, where he was designated a "sage." Whenever an FCO needed the best, they put in a name request for Nestor Llamas.

Nestor was born in New York City, and joined the Marines as a young man. When he got out in 1953, he played minor league baseball before finding his true calling in the service of others.

In 1955 Nestor started with the New York City Youth Board, where he worked with streets gangs in East Harlem, Brooklyn and the Bronx, touching and turning around many lives. Ultimately he became the supervisor of the street club workers, systematizing a program of socialization.

As the National Coordinator for Community Outreach for Puerto Rico's Department of Labor, he was given a larger canvass, facilitating the adjustment of Puerto Rican immigrants into the U.S. It was here that he learned his political skills, creating liaisons between elected officials and the migrants moving into their districts.

This led to a job with the Office of Economic Opportunity, Community Action Program, where he ultimately served as its Regional Administrator.

Nestor also served as NYC's Deputy Commissioner for Community Development in the city's Human Resource Administration under Mayor John Lindsay. He then returned to his mission to help troubled or disadvantaged young people as the Executive Director of Mobilization for Youth, Inc., a nonprofit that raised funds to provide resources and opportunities to young residents of New York's Lower East Side.

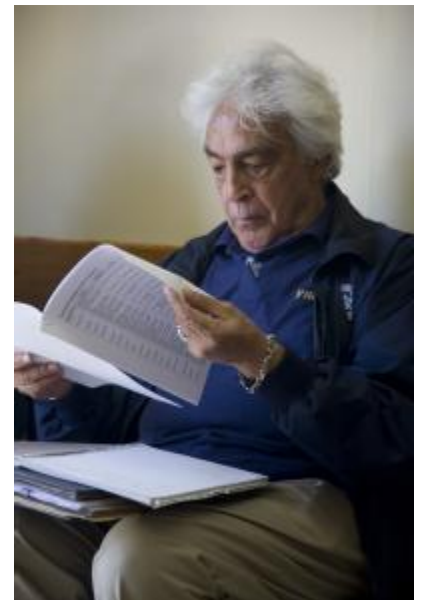
The community he served expanded again when Nestor was named the Regional Director of ACTION— Region II, a federal initiative that formed partnerships with the private sector to deliver essential social services to residents of NY, NJ, Puerto Rico and the USVI.

Everyone who met Nestor recognized he was the consummate humanitarian. He was also the ultimate communicator, ensuring that everyone had all the information needed to make a decision. When he was 60 years old, he enrolled in NY's Sign Language Institute. Nestor was incapable of leaving anyone out... This commitment led to Nestor being named the Deputy Director for Administration for the Bronx's Developmental Disabilities Services

Office, a post he held until joining FEMA on his "retirement" in 1996.

Funeral arrangements are still being made, but friends are encouraged to honor Nestor's memory by random acts of kindness.

Some memories of Nestor follow on page 3.



# COOP BRASS SCOPE P.R. CONTINUITY

The Caribbean Area Division (CAD) recently hosted a prestigious delegation: Damon Penn, FEMA Assistant Administrator for National Continuity Programs, (extreme right, below); Rex Wamsley, HQ COOP Division Director; and Eric Kretz, National Continuity Programs - COOP Division Deputy Director. These FEMA HQ officials held several meetings with federal, Territory and Commonwealth officials to address the implementation of Continuity of Operations programs in those jurisdictions.

During their visit they met with USVI Governor John DeJong, (below, center) VITEMA Director Mark Walters (second from left), federal partners, and PREMA Director Heriberto Sauri, and attended the Regional Continuity of Operation Strategic Planning Conference taking place in San Juan, Puerto Rico. They were also joined by Region II Preparedness Director Jaime Forero and CAD Director De La Campa (extreme left).



# FACES OF THE REGION



**Violet Zekaj** is a recent addition to Region II, providing professional contract support for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. She comes to us with stellar bona fides, having spent much of her professional life securing grants for top tier universities.

Violet's educational focus has been in accounting, but she has always been interested in scientific research. Her first university post was with Hunter College, where she worked in the Department of Biological Sciences, and then later joined the Support of Continuous Research Excellence (SCORE) Program, funded by the National Institute of Health. Her primary responsibility as a grant administrator was the coordination of grant applications, expert subject matter reviews and grant writing workshops. At the Weill Medical College of Cornell University, she reviewed grants and contracts involving human subjects, animal studies, and the use of biohazard/radioactive materials.

More recently, Violet worked as a professional Albanian translator, representing and assisting political refugees and asylum seekers from war-torn Kosova. (Violet and her family immigrated to the US in 1986, when she was quite young.)

Violet enjoys hiking, drawing, and reading historical biographies. She lives in New York City and always considered herself a New Yorker, even before moving to the U.S.



# REMEMBERING NESTOR...



Good morning team:

As you know, one of our R2 Ext Affairs team members has passed away... Nestor Llamas. He was also known as a "sage" among other Congressional Affairs colleagues of other FEMA regions due to his lifelong work with members of Congress, his leadership working Hispanic communities in New York, and his political understanding working for many years with NYC elected officials.

His prudent observations and ideas provided another angle in addressing issues and situations; his political savvy allowed him to identify possible "fallouts" to be avoided, and he knew how to deal with all types of people - the guy in the street, people in the Congressional ambience or staff of a small municipal office.

Above all, he was a friend, one of my mentors, and like a wise grand dad. I remember when Delyris Aquino, Michelle Feliciano, and I met him as FEMA 'newbies', he gave us good advice and encouraging words, and helped us shine. His laughter would change the stressful JFO atmosphere and make everybody feel at ease. He was always thoughtful of his colleagues and sensitive of other people's needs, as well.

Nestor, I pray you are in the Lord's hand, surrounded not only by His love, but by Puerto Rican music and the sound of "el coqui". Thanks for everything my friend.

**Maria Cecilia**

from **FCO Justo "Tito" Hernandez:**

Nestor was a friend to all.

I refuse to miss him as his memory will be with me forever. All our adventures looking for Mickey Rooney's home in all the towns we visited. He used to ask folks in the streets and to our surprise we always got an address!

A true gentleman, he was always so correct in his demeanor. Once a popular mayor in Puerto Rico saw his ever present resemblance to a famous actor and fell for him, ignoring the FCO and the GAR!!!

Always quick with sound advise, he had an incredible gift to talk to anyone and start a conversation.

Live forever Nestor, the Godfather!

**Justo Hernandez**  
FCO Region II

from **Linda Colon:**

His death is a major loss to the agency. He inspired and encouraged me never to give up; he shared his knowledge unconditionally so that I could continue growing as person, and within the agency, to better assist the affected community.

He was a great dancer and humanitarian. I will surely miss him but never forget his gentle ways. He guided and treated me as part of his family. Nestor will always be in my prayers.

Peace,  
**Linda**

**Editor's note:** News of Nestor Llamas' sudden death has shaken FEMA, with calls coming in from all over the country. Here are some thoughts from his colleagues, as well as his last evaluation, written two days before his death, by DR-1897's departing EAO Alan Smith. Although ultimately no one can evaluate Nestor, only stand in awe. He was a true leader.



from **Allan Smith:**

Nestor is the consummate professional who has the respect of all who work with him. His vast experience, understanding and sensitivity enable him to find acceptable solutions to problems and turn conflict into consensus.

JFO senior leaders value his advice and rely on his guidance in managing relationships with Senators, Members of Congress and officials at every level of government.

Nestor's work, whether in congressional affairs or community relations, is driven by a commitment to see everyone treated fairly and afforded access to the aid and assistance for which they are eligible. There are few people in FEMA who can contribute as much to the mission as Nestor does.