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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES



NACo National Membership Call – Unlocking Federal Reform: What the FEMA Act Means for Counties
July 2025

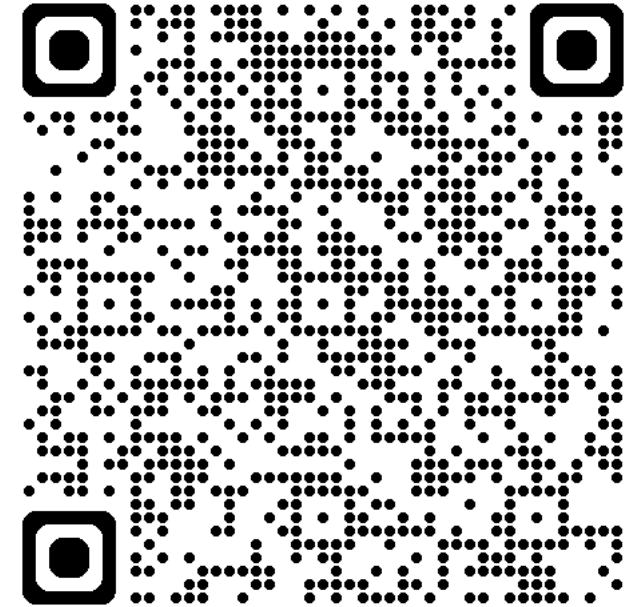
FIXING EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FOR AMERICANS (FEMA) ACT (H.R.4669) OVERVIEW

July 24: House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chair Sam Graves (R-Mo.) and Ranking Member Rick Larsen (D-Wash.) introduce bipartisan FEMA Act.

Key wins for counties:

- Transitioning the Public Assistance Program from a reimbursement to a grant model, with the opportunity for grants to be made directly to counties.
- Streamlining environmental and historic preservation reviews.
- Creating a universal disaster application for disaster survivors.
- Restructuring of FEMA's pre-disaster mitigation program by moving it to a formula-based grant.
- Creating a Public Assistance dashboard that publicly displays information for each major disaster declaration.

Next steps: Mark-up expected early September upon return from August recess.



**Scan here to access
NACo's overview blog
of the bill**

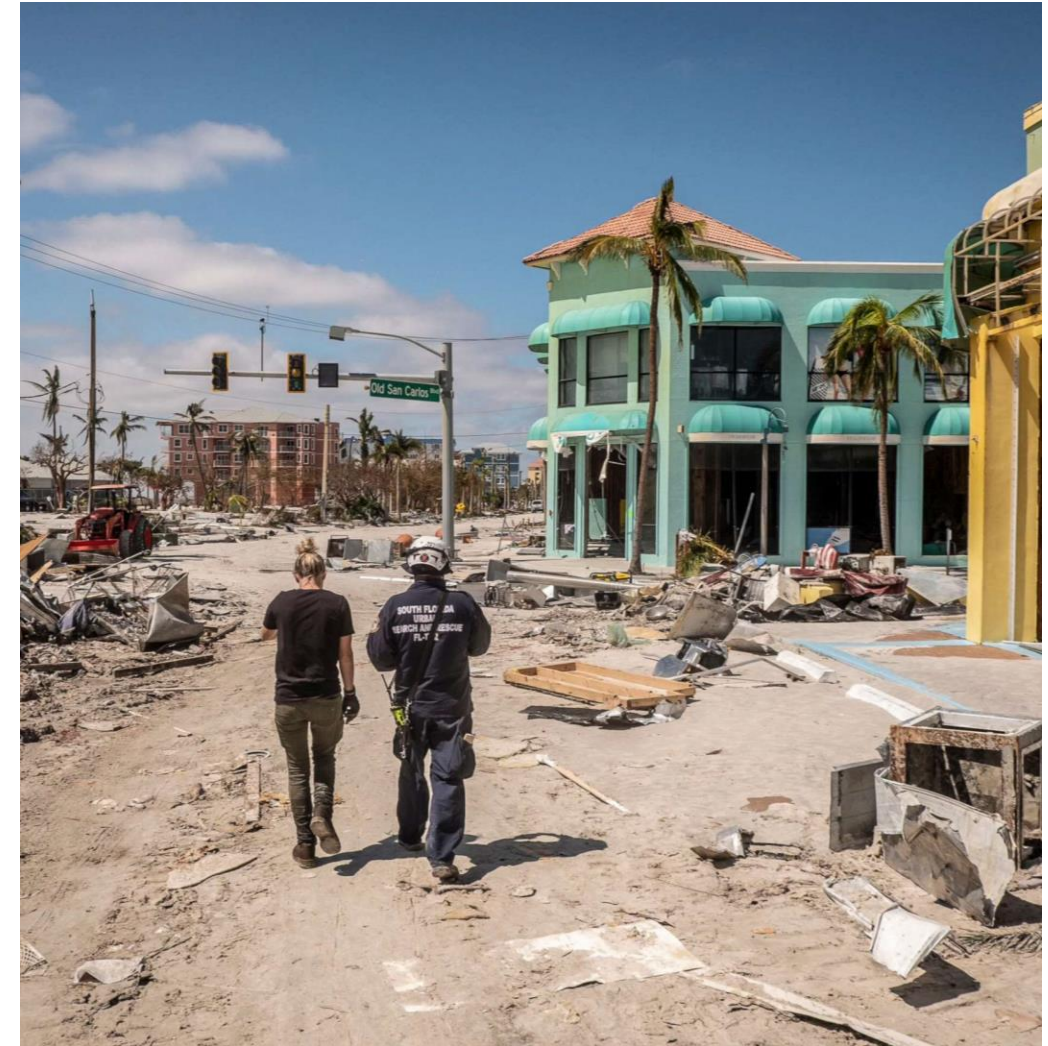
Establishing FEMA as a Cabinet-Level Agency and Outlining Roles



- **Establishes FEMA as a Cabinet-level agency**, removing it from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
- **Outlines criteria for being the FEMA Administrator and Deputy Administrator**, including no less than five years of executive leadership and demonstrated understanding of emergency management.
- **Maintains “All Hazards Approach”** to disaster management.
- **Calls for the creation of a new FEMA Veterans Advocate.**
- **Timeline:** Includes a one-year timeline to establish FEMA as an independent agency.

Public Assistance Program Reforms

- **NACo advocacy win:** Transitions FEMA Public Assistance Program from a reimbursement to a grant program, with the opportunity for grants to be made directly to counties.
- **Cost estimation:** Estimate based on cost to repair, restore or replace facility to applicable building codes and would **exclude** preexisting condition of facility.
 - One-time adjustment to a project permitted within two years of initial funding release.
- **Reporting:** Annual progress reports with descriptions of projects funded, list of completed projects and projects under construction.
- **Cost share:** Sliding scale from 65 percent – 85 percent, contingent on mitigation measures being implemented.
- **Timeline:** Creates a 120-day shot clock on getting funding out the door



Public Assistance Program Reforms

- **Creates a task force to examine open disaster claims**, which would be tasked with making recommendations to expedite closeout of existing disaster claims.
- **NACo advocacy win: Streamlines permitting process and expedites environmental and historic preservation reviews** by allowing for waivers on already disturbed land, including building up to current codes and including mitigation measures.
- **Ensures effective and timely debris removal processes** by prohibiting any additional requirements from the President that may slow clean up.
- **NACo advocacy win: Incorporates the *Disaster Management Costs Modernization Act***, which would allow for management costs to be spread across multiple disasters.
- **Creates incident period advisory panel with at least two county representatives** to provide recommendations on reforming the incident period process.
- **Incorporates the *Fire Management Assistance Grants (FMAG) for Tribal Governments Act***, which would allow for tribal governments to directly request FMAG declarations.
- **Allows for reimbursement for sheltering of emergency response personnel for up to six months after a declared disaster.**
- **NACo advocacy win: Clarifies that under federal procurement regulations as it relates to PA, counties shall be treated as states**, allowing for expedited procurement processes and removing bureaucratic red tape.

Individual Assistance Program Reforms



- **NACo advocacy win:** Creates a universal disaster application for survivors for programs across FEMA, HUD, SBA and USDA.
- **Duplication of benefits:** Clarifies that receipt of a disaster loan or charitable donation does not make an individual ineligible for FEMA's Individuals and Households Program.
- **Authorizes permanent home repairs when more cost-effective than temporary housing** and removes the requirement that homes be uninhabitable to qualify for hazard mitigation assistance.
- **Allows direct aid for repairing disaster-damaged homes** when financial assistance falls short, with a focus on people with disabilities and mitigation efforts.
- **Assistance denial letters:** Prevents denial letters being sent before insurance claims are fully resolved.
- **Directs the Administrator to provide alternative methods** to determine assistance eligibility beyond a physical address.

Mitigation Reforms

- **NACo advocacy win: Restructures FEMA's pre-disaster mitigation program** by transitioning it from a competitive program to a formula-based grant. 50 percent of all funds would be required to be passed through to localities.
 - 40 percent distributed equally among state
 - 20 percent allocated based on vulnerability to natural disasters
 - 20 percent allocated based on state population and lower median income
 - 20 percent based on the number of economically distressed or rural communities
- **Establishes new state mitigation project plan process** that would require each state to submit a list of projects for preapproval.
 - The plans would be required to have **at least one** project per county in each state.
- **Allows for the combining of pre and post disaster hazard mitigation funding for large, innovative mitigation projects.**
- **Creates a consolidated application form for pre and post disaster hazard mitigation funding.**

Transparency and Oversight Reforms

- **NACo advocacy win:** Creates a publicly available **Public Assistance dashboard** that will include:
 - Information on each PA cost estimate following each major disaster declaration
 - Status of agency review and approval
 - Explanation for any cost estimate that is not approved
 - Project-level progress reports
- **NACo advocacy win:** Creates a publicly available **Individual Assistance dashboard** that will include:
 - Number of applicants for IA following each major disaster declaration
 - Number of approved or denied applicants
 - Total amount of funding distributed
- **Requires the Comptroller General to produce a report on existing regulations and policies** and provide recommendations for removing or reforming these regulations to speed up processes and decrease administrative burdens.
- **Requires the creation and maintenance of a federal database** that displays all federal assistance distributed by FEMA, SBA and HUD.



NACo Intergovernmental Disaster Reform Task Force Advocacy



Next Steps & Advocacy Opportunities



Increase support for FEMA Act while Members of Congress are home for August recess



Provide letters of support for the bill and feedback on any necessary changes



Collect and share data related to disaster recovery to drive advocacy efforts

QUESTIONS?

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