

Preventing Our Next Natural Disaster Act

What it does:

The *Preventing Our Next Natural Disaster Act* would make several changes to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)'s pre-disaster mitigation grant program by increasing funding and improving data collection to better track and manage resources before and after natural disasters.

Why it's important:

Several recent wildfires across Southern California have damaged more than 12,000 homes and businesses and have left at least 24 people dead.

From coastal floods to catastrophic wildfires, California is among numerous states seeing an increasing number of natural disasters due to climate change. According to the World Meteorological Organization, climate change added 41 days of dangerous heat in 2024, harming human health and ecosystems.

While we are taking action to prevent climate crises, it's essential that we take the necessary steps to prepare and limit damages.

How it works:

The bill improves disaster preparedness by prioritizing vulnerable communities, integrating climate change into planning, and increasing funding for mitigation projects.

- Emphasizes assistance for communities with high natural hazard risks, environmental justice concerns, or economic disadvantages.
- Mandates guidance for incorporating climate change projections into risk assessments, cost analyses, and building standards.
- Increases federal cost-share (up to 90%) for mitigation projects in small impoverished or environmental justice communities.
- Provides technical assistance to improve grant access for underrepresented communities, focusing on effective disaster planning and climate adaptation.
- Requires FEMA to establish a comprehensive database for tracking funding and evaluating the efficacy of disaster mitigation efforts.
- Expands the percentage of Disaster Relief Fund allocations available for predisaster mitigation from 6% to 15%, with provisions for capacity building.

[~118H3655]

.....
(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To enhance predisaster mitigation to prevent future natural disasters, and
for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. SWALWELL introduced the following bill; which was referred to the
Committee on _____

A BILL

To enhance predisaster mitigation to prevent future natural
disasters, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Preventing Our Next
5 Natural Disaster Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

7 Section 203(a) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Re-
8 lief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5133(a))
9 is amended to read as follows:

1 “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section, the following
2 definitions apply:

3 “(1) HIGH HAZARD RISK.—The term ‘high haz-
4 ard risk’ means high rating of a natural hazard risk
5 according to a tool such as the National Risk Index
6 or another tool developed by the Federal Emergency
7 Management Agency.

8 “(2) ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITY.—
9 The term ‘environmental justice community’ means
10 a community primarily composed of communities of
11 color, low-income communities, or Tribal and indige-
12 nous communities, that experiences, or is at risk of
13 experiencing, higher or more adverse human health
14 or environmental effects than most communities.

15 “(3) SMALL IMPOVERISHED COMMUNITY.—The
16 term ‘small impoverished community’ means a com-
17 munity that is comprised of 50,000 or fewer individ-
18 uals and that is economically disadvantaged, as de-
19 termined by the State in which the community is lo-
20 cated and based on criteria established by the Presi-
21 dent.”.

22 **SEC. 3. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.**

23 Section 203(e) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Re-
24 lief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5133(e))
25 is amended by adding at the end the following:

1 “(3) GUIDANCE.—The Administrator may de-
2 velop guidance regarding how to incorporate climate
3 change into—

4 “(A) the National Risk Index;

5 “(B) cost-benefit analyses; and

6 “(C) adopting improved relevant con-
7 sensus-based codes, specifications, and stand-
8 ards to address natural hazards.

9 “(4) BUILDING, RESTORATION, OR REHABILITA-
10 TION.—The Administrator may issue guidance to en-
11 sure that funds provided under this section are used
12 to support the building, restoration, or rehabilitation
13 of hazard mitigation projects that are—

14 “(A) planned and designed around the fu-
15 ture projections of climate change over the life
16 cycle of the project; and

17 “(B) built to withstand future flooding,
18 wildfires, or other natural disasters.”.

19 **SEC. 4. CRITERIA FOR ASSISTANCE AWARDS.**

20 Section 203(g) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Re-
21 lief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5133(g))
22 is amended—

23 (1) by striking “and” at the end of paragraph
24 (11);

1 (2) by redesignating paragraph (12) as para-
2 graph (13); and

3 (3) by inserting after paragraph (11) the fol-
4 lowing:

5 “(12) and prioritize communities that are in
6 high hazard risk communities, environmental justice
7 communities, communities with low tax revenue base
8 per capita, and communities with a low rate of code
9 adoption and enforcement and infrastructure main-
10 tenance expenditures (the Administrator of the Fed-
11 eral Emergency Management Agency shall establish
12 guidelines to develop measurable criteria to deter-
13 mine such priority for high hazard risk communities
14 and integrate the data into a tool such as the Na-
15 tional Risk Index and use the Resilience Analysis
16 and Planning Tool to help target the communities
17 with the greatest need of assistance); and”.

18 **SEC. 5. FEDERAL SHARE.**

19 Section 203(h)(2) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster
20 Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C.
21 5133(h)(2) is amended to read as follows:

22 “(2) SMALL IMPOVERISHED COMMUNITIES AND
23 ENVIRONMENT JUSTICE COMMUNITIES.—Notwith-
24 standing paragraph (1), the President may con-
25 tribute up to 90 percent of the total cost of a miti-

1 gation activity carried out in a small impoverished
2 community or an environmental justice commu-
3 nity.”.

4 **SEC. 6. NATIONAL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE**
5 **PREDISASTER MITIGATION ASSISTANCE.**

6 Section 203(i)(1) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster
7 Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C.
8 5133(i)(1)) is amended—

9 (1) by striking “6 percent” and inserting “15
10 percent”; and

11 (2) by adding at the end the following: “From
12 such total amount made available from the Disaster
13 Relief Fund, with respect to each major disaster, the
14 President may set aside 2 percent of the estimated
15 aggregate amount of the grants to be made pursu-
16 ant to sections 403, 406, 407, 408, 410, 416, and
17 428 for the major disaster for community planning
18 and capacity building assistance.”.

19 **SEC. 7. COMMUNITY OUTREACH.**

20 Section 203 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief
21 and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5133) is
22 amended by adding at the end the following:

23 “(m) **COMMUNITY OUTREACH ASSISTANCE.**—The
24 Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management
25 Agency, in collaboration with organizations, such as the

1 United States Cooperative Extension System and the Ex-
2 tension Disaster Education Network, shall provide com-
3 munity outreach to communities under this section, with
4 a goal of increasing applications from communities with
5 high hazard risk, environmental justice communities, com-
6 munities with low tax revenue base per capita, and com-
7 munities with a low rate of code adoption and enforcement
8 and infrastructure maintenance expenditures, regarding
9 how to plan and prioritize projects based on current cli-
10 mate conditions, future hazard risk, and social vulner-
11 ability assessments as well as how to successfully develop,
12 submit, and administer a grant under this section.”.

13 **SEC. 8. IMPROVED DATA COLLECTION.**

14 Not later than 3 years after the date of enactment
15 of this Act, the Administrator of the Federal Emergency
16 Management Agency shall establish a central Federal
17 database at the Agency, in coordination with the Depart-
18 ment of Housing and Urban Development, the Environ-
19 ment Protection Agency, the Economic Development Ad-
20 ministration, the Small Business Administration, the
21 Army Corps of Engineers, and any other relevant agencies
22 the Administrator chooses to include, to consolidate fund-
23 ing data collected by all local, State, and Federal agencies
24 involved in post-disaster response and predisaster mitiga-
25 tion spending and categorize the data by type of project,

1 funding source, and hazard types using an user friendly
2 database and interactive map. Such database shall also in-
3 clude—

4 (1) the collection and posting of census track
5 data and post aggregate demographic data, pursuant
6 to the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. 3501 et
7 seq.) as well as any future guidance by such office
8 on data equity on the impact of natural disaster and
9 Federal recovery efforts to better allocate and trace
10 funds; and

11 (2) post-project evaluations by the Agency to
12 analyze disaster spending and report findings on
13 what may have been saved by proper predisaster
14 mitigation.