

DRRA

BUILDING FASTER. BUILDING SMARTER.

DISASTER **RECOVERY** **REFORM** **ACT**

**Summarizing
Division D of
H.R. 302, as
amended**



**HOUSE
TRANSPORT**





Division D of H.R. 302, as amended, is the Disaster Recovery Reform Act (DRRA). The most comprehensive disaster program reform since the post-Katrina law, DRRA includes many important bipartisan reforms to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) that will help our communities better prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate against disasters of all kinds.

The legislation includes provisions from a number of FEMA reform bills previously approved by the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and the House of Representatives, including:

- The Disaster Recovery Reform Act (H.R. 4460)
- The Disaster Assistance Fairness and Accountability Act of 2017 (H.R. 3176)
- To amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act concerning the statute of limitations for actions to recover disaster or emergency assistance payments (H.R. 1678)
- The Disaster Support for Communities and Homeowners Act (H.R. 1684)
- The Community Empowerment for Mitigated Properties Act of 2017 (H.R. 1735)
- To ensure that Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency considers severe local impact in making a recommendation to the President for a major disaster declaration (H.R. 1665)
- The Pacific Northwest Earthquake Preparedness Act of 2017 (H.R. 654)
- The SMART Rebuilding Act (H.R. 4455)

DISASTER RECOVERY REFORM ACT (DRRA)

The Disaster Recovery Reform Act (DRRA) is bipartisan legislation that addresses the rising costs of disasters in the United States, and reforms federal disaster programs to ensure our communities are better prepared for future hurricanes, flooding, earthquakes, wildfires, and other disasters.

This legislation particularly focuses on improving predisaster planning and mitigation, which will reduce the future loss of life and the rising costs of disasters throughout America. Furthermore, the DRRA incentivizes building and rebuilding better and smarter to facilitate speedy recovery efforts whenever and wherever disaster does strike.

Strengthening mitigation practices is also a wise use of taxpayer dollars; for every \$1 spent on mitigation, between \$4 and \$8 is saved in avoided disaster recovery costs. That is why this bipartisan bill is a vital response to recent severe weather events and natural disasters of 2017 and 2018. We can encourage better building to save lives and taxpayer money in the future.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

According to numerous studies, disaster losses and federal disaster spending have increased significantly over the last 50 years. For example, one report has found that between 1980 and 2011, North America suffered \$1.06 trillion in total losses.

Another study found that since 1952, the cost of natural disasters to the federal government more than tripled as a function of gross domestic product.

As 2017 demonstrated, the toll disasters take in human lives and economic impacts can be devastating. While no one wants another disaster, lessons learned in 2017 provide data that can be used to improve federal disaster programs.

The Disaster Recovery Reform Act will help American communities better prepare for, withstand, and recover from the next disaster. By encouraging more cost-effective and smart investment of taxpayer dollars before disaster strikes, the bill will help save lives and reduce federal, state, and local costs in the long run.

IMPORTANCE OF PREDISASTER MITIGATION

A major focus of the DRRA is strengthening disaster mitigation – actions taken proactively to reduce loss of life and property by lessening the impact of future disasters.

Effective mitigation minimizes the potential loss of life and property from a disaster based on identifying and understanding the risks in a given area or community. Mitigation can encompass a wide variety of activities, including preparation and planning, elevating or moving structures prone to flooding, and hardening structures to mitigate effects of hurricanes or earthquakes.

Placing greater federal, state, and local emphasis on mitigation will:

- Save lives;
- Minimize damage to property;
- Reduce disaster costs;
- Help people recover more quickly; and
- Save taxpayers money.

The Disaster Recovery Reform Act deals with other critical issues such as wildfire prevention, eligibility for disaster assistance, and agency efficiency and accountability. It also includes provisions from other FEMA reform bills that were approved by the Committee or House of Representatives previously this year. The additional provisions will help to streamline and clarify the assistance process for recipients of FEMA aid and further promote mitigation.

For example, the Disaster Recovery Reform Act:

- Recognizes the benefits of taking action before a catastrophe occurs, and reforms FEMA and the Stafford Act by ensuring that a percentage of assistance provided in the wake of disasters is invested in predisaster hazard mitigation so that states, tribal, and local governments can pre-empt the damage and distress that results from disasters;
- Clarifies what may be eligible for mitigation funding, making sure investments are cost

effective and reduce risk; and

- Speeds recovery by creating efficiencies in FEMA’s programs such as getting structures inspected faster.
- Speeds recovery by creating efficiencies in FEMA’s programs such as getting structures inspected faster.
- Clarifies federal programs to help expedite assistance for recipients of FEMA aid, resolve issues quickly, and rebuild more efficiently.
- Provides more flexibility in meeting disaster survivors’ housing needs.
- Simplifies federal requirements for individuals and state and local governments.
- Helps communities meet the needs of pets in disasters.
- Increases transparency and oversight in the disaster assistance process.

