To improve Federal disaster relief and emergency assistance, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

December 11, 2015

Mr. KILMER (for himself, Mr. NEWHOUSE, and Mr. REICHERT) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

A BILL

To improve Federal disaster relief and emergency assistance, and for other purposes.

1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

2 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

3 This Act may be cited as the “Individual Assistance Improvement Act of 2015”.

4 SEC. 2. IMPROVEMENTS TO FEDERAL DISASTER RELIEF AND EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE.

5 (a) REPORT ON SMALL STATE AND RURAL AREA ASSISTANCE.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Ad-
ministrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agen-
cy shall submit to Congress a report with recommenda-
tions for improving Federal assistance, with respect to
small States and rural areas, under the Robert T. Stafford
Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C.
5121 et seq.). The report shall include an identification
of additional resources required for recommended im-
provements.

(b) FACTORS FOR INDIVIDUAL ASSISTANCE PRO-
gram.—In measuring the severity, magnitude, and impact
of a disaster and evaluating the need for assistance to in-
dividuals under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and
Emergency Assistance Act, the Administrator shall not
apply, with respect to a rural area, the factor set out in
section 206.48(b)(1) of title 44, Code of Federal Regula-
tions (relating to the concentration of damages).

(c) RELEASE OF DOCUMENTATION RELATED TO DIS-
aster Declaration Decisions.—Not later than 25
days after a Governor, or Chief Executive of an Indian
tribal government, requests documentation related to a
major disaster declaration decision under section 401 of
the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency As-
sistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170), the Administrator shall
provide the Governor, or Chief Executive, with all such
documentation, including—
(1) an analysis of the factors that the Federal Emergency Management Agency considered in making the decision, including any threshold, limit, or average that the Agency applied; and

(2) a rationale explaining the decision.

(d) Study on Damage Assessment.—

(1) Study.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct a comprehensive review of—

(A) the damage assessment processes of the Agency with respect to major disaster declarations; and

(B) the teams that carry out such processes.

(2) Report.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General shall submit to Congress a report on the results of the review conducted under paragraph (1), including recommendations for improving such processes.

(e) Biennial Study of Average Amount of Individual Assistance.—

(1) Study.—Not later than the end of the first quarter of the first full fiscal year beginning after the date of the enactment of this Act, and biennially
thereafter, the Administrator shall conduct a study—

(A) to compare—

(i) the average amount of individual assistance provided per person for each major disaster declared during the 5 most recently completed fiscal years;

(ii) the average damages realized per individual for each such disaster; and

(iii) for each event where a request for a major disaster declaration was denied during the 5 most recently completed fiscal years, the average damages realized per individual for each such event; and

(B) to collect the data needed to update the table included after section 206.48(b)(6) of title 44, Code of Federal Regulations (relating to the average amount of individual assistance by State).

(2) REPORT AND UPDATE.—Not later than 180 days after the completion of each study under paragraph (1), the Administrator shall submit to Congress a report on the results of the study and update the table described in paragraph (1)(B).
(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act, the following definitions shall apply:

(1) GOVERNOR.—The term “Governor” has the meaning given such term in section 102 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5122).

(2) RURAL.—The term “rural” means an area that is located—

(A) outside a metropolitan statistical area, as defined by the Office of Management and Budget; or

(B) in a census tract in a metropolitan statistical area with a Department of Agriculture rural-urban commuting area code of 4 or higher.

(3) SMALL STATE.—The term “small State” has the same meaning as such term is used in the table included after section 206.48(b)(6) of title 44, Code of Federal Regulations.