

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 6084

To amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to ensure that unmet needs after a major disaster are met.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 26, 2023

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana (for himself and Ms. PLASKETT) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

A BILL

To amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to ensure that unmet needs after a major disaster are met.

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 “Expediting Disaster
5 Recovery Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. UNMET NEEDS ASSISTANCE.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—Title IV of the Robert T. Stafford
8 Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C.

1 5170 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
2 lowing:

3 **“SEC. 431. UNMET NEEDS ASSISTANCE.**

4 “(a) IN GENERAL.—After the declaration of a major
5 disaster under section 401, the President may direct the
6 Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management
7 Agency to provide to a State assistance necessary for
8 meeting unmet needs as a result of such disaster.

9 “(b) FUNDING.—

10 “(1) AMOUNT OF FUNDING.—Not later than 30
11 days after the President declares a major disaster
12 under section 401, the President, acting through the
13 Administrator, may allocate an amount that equals
14 up to 10 percent of the estimated aggregate amount
15 of the grants to be made pursuant to sections 406
16 and 408 for the major disaster in order to provide
17 technical and financial assistance under this section
18 and such amounts shall be considered to be related
19 to activities carried out with assistance provided
20 under this Act.

21 “(2) ESTIMATED AGGREGATE AMOUNT.—Not
22 later than 180 days after each major disaster de-
23 clared pursuant to this Act, the estimated aggregate
24 amount of grants for purposes of paragraph (1)
25 shall be determined by the President and such esti-

1 mated amount need not be reduced, increased, or
2 changed due to variations in estimates.

3 “(3) NO REDUCTION IN AMOUNTS.—Nothing in
4 this section shall be construed to reduce the
5 amounts otherwise made available for sections 403,
6 404, 406, 407, 408, 410, 416, and 428 under this
7 Act.

8 “(c) UNMET NEEDS.—Financial assistance provided
9 under this section may be used to provide assistance, in
10 addition to other amounts made available under this Act,
11 for the following unmet needs:

12 “(1) Disaster-related home repair and rebuild-
13 ing assistance to families for permanent housing
14 purposes, including in conjunction with eligible ex-
15 penditures under section 408.

16 “(2) Disaster-related unmet needs of families
17 who are unable to obtain adequate assistance from
18 other sources.

19 “(3) Other disaster-related services that allevi-
20 ate human suffering and promote the well-being of
21 disaster victims.

22 “(4) Economic and business activities (includ-
23 ing food and agriculture) after a disaster to imple-
24 ment post-disaster economic recovery measures, in-
25 cluding planning and technical assistance for long-

1 term economic recovery plans, infrastructure im-
2 provements, business or infrastructure financing,
3 market or industry research, and other activities au-
4 thorized under a comprehensive economic develop-
5 ment strategy.

6 “(d) ACCOUNTING AND FISCAL CONTROLS.—

7 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 6 months
8 after receipt of funds and every 6 months thereafter
9 until all such funds are expended, each State receiv-
10 ing such funds shall submit to the Administrator a
11 report that includes—

12 “(A) the criteria established for deter-
13 mining how the funds are spent;

14 “(B) the allocation of such funds; and

15 “(C) the process for public notice and com-
16 ment.

17 “(2) COMPLIANCE.—Section 312(b) shall apply
18 to this section.

19 “(3) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—A State that re-
20 ceives funds under this section may expend not more
21 than 5 percent of the amount of such funds for the
22 administrative costs of providing financial assistance
23 to individuals and households in the State.”.

1 (b) APPLICABILITY.—This section and the amend-
2 ments made by this section shall apply to funds appro-
3 priated on or after the date of enactment of this Act.

4 **SEC. 3. FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR DISASTER DEC-**
5 **LARATIONS.**

6 (a) IN GENERAL.—In making recommendations to
7 the President regarding the declaration of a major disaster
8 or emergency pursuant to section 401 of the Robert T.
9 Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act
10 (42 U.S.C. 5170) or the proposed non-Federal share of
11 the cost of carrying out activities with assistance provided
12 under such Act, the Administrator of the Federal Emer-
13 gency Management Agency shall give greater weight and
14 consideration to severe local impact resulting from such
15 disaster or emergency and, in the 5-year period preceding
16 such disaster or emergency, whether multiple other disas-
17 ters or emergencies have occurred in the affected area.

18 (b) REVISIONS TO GUIDANCE, POLICIES, AND REGU-
19 LATIONS.—The Administrator shall take such actions as
20 are necessary to revise any policies, guidance, or regula-
21 tions of the Agency to implement subsection (a).

22 (c) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date
23 of enactment of this section, the Administrator shall sub-
24 mit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastruc-
25 ture of the House of Representatives and the Committee

1 on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the
2 Senate a report on the implementation of this section and
3 shall include in such report a description of—

4 (1) changes made to guidance, policies, or regu-
5 lations pursuant to subsection (b); and

6 (2) the number of major disasters and emer-
7 gencies that have been declared pursuant to section
8 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and
9 Emergency Assistance Act based on the criteria de-
10 scribed in subsection (a).

11 **SEC. 4. REPAIR AND REBUILDING.**

12 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 408(c) of the Robert T.
13 Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act
14 (42 U.S.C. 5174) is amended—

15 (1) in paragraph (2)—

16 (A) in subparagraph (A)(i) by striking “to
17 a safe and sanitary living or functioning condi-
18 tion”; and

19 (B) in subparagraph (B)—

20 (i) by striking “A recipient of” and
21 inserting the following:

22 “(i) EVIDENCE OF OTHER MEANS OF
23 ASSISTANCE.—A recipient of”; and

24 (ii) by adding at the end the fol-
25 lowing:

1 “(ii) COORDINATION WITH OTHER AS-
2 SISTANCE.—Assistance allowed under this
3 paragraph may be used in coordination
4 with other sources for the repair and re-
5 building of an owner-occupied residence.”;
6 and

7 (2) in paragraph (4) by striking “in cases in
8 which” and all that follows through the end of the
9 paragraph and inserting “if the President considers
10 it a cost effective alternative to other housing solu-
11 tions, including the costs associated with temporary
12 housing provided under this section, and long-term
13 rebuilding costs associated with section 431.”.

14 (b) APPLICABILITY.—This section and the amend-
15 ments made by this section shall apply to funds appro-
16 priated on or after the date of enactment of this Act.

17 **SEC. 5. FEMA EMERGENCY HOME REPAIR PROGRAM.**

18 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 403(a) of the Robert T.
19 Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act
20 (42 U.S.C. 5170b(a)) is amended—

21 (1) in paragraph (3)—

22 (A) in subparagraph (I) by striking “and”
23 at the end;

24 (B) in subparagraph (J) by striking the
25 period and inserting “; and”; and

1 (C) by adding at the end the following:

2 “(K) minor repairs up to habitability of
3 owner-occupied homes damaged by the disaster
4 in order for survivors to safely shelter in
5 place.”; and

6 (2) by adding at the end the following:

7 “(5) DUPLICATION OF BENEFIT LIMITA-
8 TIONS.—Notwithstanding section 312, any minor re-
9 pairs up to habitability of owner-occupied homes
10 may not be considered a duplication of any owner
11 benefits.

12 “(6) SHELTERING AND HOUSING OPTIONS.—
13 Not later than 15 days after a declaration of a
14 major disaster, the Federal coordinating officer shall
15 provide all sheltering and housing options available
16 under this section to a State Governor, or the des-
17 ignated State coordinating officer.

18 “(7) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection, the
19 term ‘minor repairs up to habitability’ means the
20 minimum standards for permanent housing de-
21 scribed in section 576.403(c) of title 24, Code of
22 Federal Regulations (or successor regulations).”.

23 (b) RULEMAKING.—Not later than 2 years after the
24 date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the
25 Federal Emergency Management Agency shall issue final

1 regulations to implement the amendments made by this
2 section.

3 **SEC. 6. APPEALS OF INDIVIDUALS AND HOUSEHOLDS PRO-**
4 **GRAM BENEFITS.**

5 The Administrator shall revise section 206.115 of
6 title 44, Code of Federal Regulations, to require the Fed-
7 eral Emergency Management Agency to provide to any ap-
8 plicant who appeals a determination of eligibility of assist-
9 ance—

10 (1) any documentation used to make such de-
11 termination, including any inspection documents
12 that exist;

13 (2) a description of—

14 (A) the reasons for such determination;
15 and

16 (B) recommended steps that could be
17 taken to remedy a determination of ineligibility,
18 including, as applicable, a list of additional doc-
19 umentation that the applicant may provide; and

20 (3) any inspection documents that exist not
21 later than 10 days after the completion of the in-
22 spection.

23 **SEC. 7. PERIOD OF ASSISTANCE.**

24 The Administrator shall revise section 206.115 of
25 title 44, Code of Federal Regulations, to extend the period

1 of assistance for Federal assistance to individuals and
2 households to 24 months after the date of a major disaster
3 declaration pursuant to section 401 of the Robert T. Staf-
4 ford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42
5 U.S.C. 5170).

6 **SEC. 8. REPORT TO CONGRESS ON MAJOR DISASTER DEC-**
7 **LARATIONS.**

8 Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment
9 of this Act, the Administrator shall submit to the Com-
10 mittee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
11 of the Senate and the Committee on Transportation and
12 Infrastructure of the House of Representatives a report
13 containing the following information with respect to each
14 major disaster declared pursuant to section 401 of the
15 Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assist-
16 ance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170) during the 5-year period pre-
17 ceding such date of enactment:

18 (1) The process used by the Federal Emergency
19 Management Agency to determine individual house-
20 hold need.

21 (2) An itemization of the most common reasons
22 for denial of individual and household assistance
23 pursuant to section 408 of the Robert T. Stafford
24 Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42
25 U.S.C. 5174).

1 (3) The rate of appeals of denial of such assist-
2 ance.

3 (4) The amount of time the Agency takes to
4 issue a decision regarding eligibility for individual
5 assistance, disaggregated by each such major dis-
6 aster.

7 (5) Information on the use of Disaster Legal
8 Services and the number of applicants who were eli-
9 gible for such services.

10 (6) The total number of Disaster Legal Services
11 volunteers as of such date of enactment.

12 (7) The number of such volunteers who were
13 activated for each such major disaster.

14 (8) The amount of time taken after the declara-
15 tion of each such major disaster to set up disaster
16 recovery centers that provide access to individual as-
17 sistance.

18 (9) The number of disaster recovery centers
19 opened for each such major disaster.

20 (10) The process used for selecting the location
21 of such disaster recovery centers.

22 (11) The average amount of time disaster re-
23 covery centers remained open.

24 (12) The average amount of time individual
25 survivors spend at such centers.

1 (13) A description of outreach efforts in low-in-
2 come, rural, and underserved communities regarding
3 the availability of assistance provided by the Federal
4 Emergency Management Agency under the Robert
5 T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assist-
6 ance Act.

7 **SEC. 9. REVIEW BY COMPTROLLER GENERAL.**

8 Not later than 5 years after the date of enactment
9 of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States
10 shall—

11 (1) conduct a review of the fiscal controls of
12 States that receive assistance under section 431 of
13 the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emer-
14 gency Assistance Act, as added by section 2; and

15 (2) make recommendations regarding the pro-
16 gram established under such section to the Com-
17 mittee on Homeland Security and Governmental Af-
18 fairs of the Senate and the Committee on Transpor-
19 tation and Infrastructure of the House of Represent-
20 atives.

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