

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2428

To require the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a study regarding a Federal buyout program available to homeowners with properties in high-risk catastrophic wildfire disaster areas, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 27, 2025

Ms. FRIEDMAN (for herself, Ms. BROWNLEY, Mr. LIEU, Mr. MULLIN, and Mr. SHERMAN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and in addition to the Committee on Financial Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To require the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a study regarding a Federal buyout program available to homeowners with properties in high-risk catastrophic wildfire disaster areas, 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 “Wildfire Homeowner
5 Relief Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. GAO STUDY ON A FEDERAL BUYOUT PROGRAM FOR**
2 **HIGH-RISK WILDFIRE AREAS.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the
4 United States shall conduct a study to analyze the feasi-
5 bility of using Federal grant programs to purchase prop-
6 erty from homeowners, voluntarily selling such properties,
7 before and after a catastrophic wildfire disaster.

8 (b) EXISTING COVERED BUYOUTS.—In conducting
9 the study under subsection (a), the Comptroller General
10 shall compile recommendations on—

11 (1) how to develop a national database on cov-
12 ered buyouts, existing on the date of enactment of
13 this Act, with information on what grant program
14 was used to purchase each respective property under
15 such buyouts, what entity is responsible for main-
16 taining such property, and any development on such
17 property following the covered buyout; and

18 (2) how the Federal Emergency Management
19 Agency and the Department of Housing and Urban
20 Development can exchange information about any
21 covered buyout in process as of the date of enact-
22 ment of this Act.

23 (c) NEW WILDFIRE BUYOUT PROGRAM.—In con-
24 ducting the study under subsection (a) of this Act, the
25 Comptroller General shall—

1 (1) analyze how a program for the buyout of
2 properties endangered or impacted by catastrophic
3 wildfire disasters would compare to covered buyout
4 programs existing on the date of enactment of this
5 Act, including any floodplain disaster buyout pro-
6 grams;

7 (2) provide recommendations on which depart-
8 ment, agency, or program should house a program
9 for the buyout of properties endangered or impacted
10 by catastrophic wildfire disasters; and

11 (3) provide land use recommendations for prop-
12 erties after a covered buyout, including—

13 (A) how to ensure specific purchases and
14 future land uses will reduce catastrophic wild-
15 fire risk, loss of life, and loss of property during
16 catastrophic wildfires;

17 (B) how land use may be different for
18 rural compared to urban communities and for
19 disadvantaged compared to high-income com-
20 munities;

21 (C) how to allow flexibility for communities
22 to decide how to use the land following a cov-
23 ered buyout; and

24 (D) with respect to properties in high-risk
25 areas prior to catastrophic wildfire disaster and

1 for properties impacted after a catastrophic
2 wildfire disaster, eligibility requirements, includ-
3 ing—

4 (i) recommendations for mapping
5 which areas are at the highest risk for cat-
6 astrophic wildfire; and

7 (ii) methodology for determining
8 which areas would be most effective for im-
9 plementing a Federal buyout program, in-
10 cluding consideration for where the great-
11 est benefit would be derived as a result of
12 evacuating individuals in efforts to avoid
13 loss of life.

14 (d) AUTHORITY TO DEFINE TERMS.—In conducting
15 the study under subsection (a), the Comptroller General
16 shall develop definitions for the terms “development”,
17 “disadvantaged community”, “high-income community”,
18 and “catastrophic wildfire”.

19 (e) REPORT.—Not later than 12 months after the
20 date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General
21 shall submit to Congress a report identifying findings and
22 conclusions, including—

23 (1) the results of the study conducted pursuant
24 to subsection (a);

1 (2) any recommendations made under sub-
2 section (b);

3 (3) recommendations on ways to incentivize
4 participation in the program described in subsection
5 (c);

6 (4) analysis of the economic impacts of the pro-
7 gram described in subsection (c) and the cost of the
8 program to the Federal Government; and

9 (5) the definitions developed under subsection
10 (d).

11 (f) COVERED BUYOUT DEFINED.—In this Act, a
12 “covered buyout” means a purchase of property by the
13 Federal Government from a homeowner who voluntarily
14 sold such property because such property was recognized
15 by the Federal Government to be in an area endangered
16 or impacted by a catastrophic natural disaster.

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