

117TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

S. 1617

AN ACT

To modify the requirements for the Administrator of the Small Business Administration relating to declaring a disaster in a rural area, 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,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Disaster Assistance
3 for Rural Communities Act”.

4 **SEC. 2. DISASTER DECLARATION IN RURAL AREAS.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 7(b) of the Small Busi-
6 ness Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)) is amended by inserting after
7 paragraph (15) the following:

8 “(16) DISASTER DECLARATION IN RURAL
9 AREAS.—

10 “(A) DEFINITIONS.—In this paragraph—

11 “(i) the term ‘rural area’ means any
12 county or other political subdivision of a
13 State, the District of Columbia, or a terri-
14 tory or possession of the United States
15 that is designated as a rural area by the
16 Bureau of the Census; and

17 “(ii) the term ‘significant damage’
18 means, with respect to property, uninsured
19 losses of not less than 40 percent of the es-
20 timated fair replacement value or pre-dis-
21 aster fair market value of the damaged
22 property, whichever is lower.

23 “(B) DISASTER DECLARATION.—For the
24 purpose of making loans under paragraph (1)
25 or (2), the Administrator may declare a disaster
26 in a rural area for which a major disaster was

1 declared by the President under section 401 of
2 the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and
3 Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170)
4 and for which individual assistance was not au-
5 thorized under section 408 of such Act (42
6 U.S.C. 5174) if—

7 “(i) the Governor of the State or the
8 Chief Executive of the Indian tribal gov-
9 ernment in which the rural area is located
10 requests such a declaration; and

11 “(ii) any home, small business con-
12 cern, private nonprofit organization, or
13 small agricultural cooperative has incurred
14 significant damage in the rural area.

15 “(C) SBA REPORT.—Not later than 120
16 days after the date of enactment of this para-
17 graph, and every year thereafter, the Adminis-
18 trator shall submit to the Committee on Small
19 Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate
20 and the Committee on Small Business of the
21 House of Representatives a report on, with re-
22 spect to the 1-year period preceding submission
23 of the report—

24 “(i) any economic injury that resulted
25 from a major disaster declared by the

1 President under section 401 of the Robert
2 T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency
3 Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170) in a rural
4 area;

5 “(ii) each request for assistance made
6 by the Governor of a State or the Chief
7 Executive of an Indian tribal government
8 under subparagraph (B)(i) and the re-
9 sponse of the Administrator, including the
10 timeline for each response; and

11 “(iii) any regulatory changes that will
12 impact the ability of communities in rural
13 areas to obtain disaster assistance under
14 this subsection.”.

15 (b) REGULATIONS.—Not later than 120 days after
16 the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator of
17 the Small Business Administration shall issue regulations
18 to carry out the amendment made by subsection (a).

19 (c) GAO REPORT.—

20 (1) DEFINITION OF RURAL AREA.—In this sub-
21 section, the term “rural area” means any county or
22 other political subdivision of a State, the District of
23 Columbia, or a territory or possession of the United
24 States that is designated as a rural area by the Bu-
25 reau of the Census.

1 (2) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the
2 date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller Gen-
3 eral of the United States shall submit to the Com-
4 mittee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of
5 the Senate and the Committee on Small Business of
6 the House of Representatives a report on—

7 (A) any unique challenges that commu-
8 nities in rural areas face compared to commu-
9 nities in urbanized areas when seeking to obtain
10 disaster assistance under section 7(b) of the
11 Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)); and

12 (B) legislative recommendations for im-
13 proving access to disaster assistance for com-
14 munities in rural areas.

Passed the Senate September 28, 2022.

Attest:

Secretary.

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