

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5407

To require certain States to submit a continuity of operations plan for elections in the event of a major disaster, to require the Comptroller General of the United States to report on assistance for election administration in the event of a major disaster, and to require the Election Assistance Commission to award grants to strengthen elections against climate change-driven disasters, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 16, 2025

Mr. MORELLE (for himself, Ms. SEWELL, Mrs. TORRES of California, and Ms. JOHNSON of Texas) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on House Administration

A BILL

To require certain States to submit a continuity of operations plan for elections in the event of a major disaster, to require the Comptroller General of the United States to report on assistance for election administration in the event of a major disaster, and to require the Election Assistance Commission to award grants to strengthen elections against climate change-driven disasters, 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 “Climate Resilient Elec-
3 tions Act”.

4 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

5 Congress makes the following findings:

6 (1) In January 2017, the Department of Home-
7 land Security determined that the Nation’s election
8 infrastructure qualifies as critical infrastructure for
9 national security purposes.

10 (2) According to the Department of Homeland
11 Security, “[t]his designation recognizes that the
12 United States’ election infrastructure is of such vital
13 importance to the American way of life that its inca-
14 pacitation or destruction would have a devastating
15 effect on the country”.

16 (3) Election administration consistently faces
17 substantial threats because of severe natural disas-
18 ters. Delayed elections or damaged or destroyed poll-
19 ing places, voting machines, ballots, or transpor-
20 tation and utility infrastructure may disenfranchise
21 voters, undermine confidence in elections, or even
22 alter election outcomes.

23 (4) Hurricane Sandy made landfall in New
24 York and New Jersey just days before the 2012
25 presidential election, displacing as many as 776,000
26 residents and causing unprecedented election admin-

1 istration challenges. The jurisdictions most affected
2 by Hurricane Sandy saw significantly worse voter
3 turnout in the 2012 presidential election than those
4 unaffected by the storm.

5 (5) In 2016, California experienced 12 major
6 fires in the three months leading up to Election
7 Day. In 2018, the State experienced 15 major fires
8 leading up to Election Day. These fires displaced
9 voters, burned residences, and damaged polling sta-
10 tions. Climate change has extended wildfire season
11 in the American west into the late Fall: On Novem-
12 ber 8, 2018, just two days after Election Day, the
13 Camp Fire ignited, eventually claiming 85 lives and
14 destroying over 18,000 structures—the deadliest fire
15 in California history. Evacuation orders because of
16 wildfires displace hundreds of thousands of voters
17 each year, well into the days leading up to the elec-
18 tion.

19 (6) In 2018, Hurricane Michael hit the Florida
20 panhandle just 27 days before the midterm elections,
21 causing at least 16 deaths, damaging or destroying
22 an estimated 40,000 homes, and resulting in ap-
23 proximately \$25 billion in damages. The destruction
24 displaced tens of thousands of voters and forced the
25 closure of polling places, significantly depressing

1 turnout amongst voters recovering from the hurri-
2 cane who were forced to travel longer distances to
3 cast a ballot.

4 (7) In 2021, Hurricane Ida forced the Governor
5 of Louisiana to delay several elections, scheduled for
6 October, and relocate and consolidate polling places
7 due to devastating damage. In the hardest hit parts
8 of the State, some voters had to cast their ballots in
9 large tents because of the significant damage.

10 (8) In 2022, voters in Kentucky displaced by
11 tornadoes that ravaged the State in the months lead-
12 ing up to the primary election had to vote absentee
13 in order to cast a ballot in their home counties.

14 (9) Hurricane Helene caused significant dam-
15 age and devastation throughout the southeastern
16 United States—particularly in Florida, Georgia,
17 North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Vir-
18 ginia—when it made landfall in September 2024.
19 The hurricane’s destruction was extreme, occurring
20 during the early and mail voting period for the No-
21 vember 2024 elections and displacing thousands
22 while disrupting mail services for countless voters
23 who rely on the United States Postal Service to cast
24 a ballot.

1 (10) Hurricane Milton caused billions of dollars
2 in damage, spawned numerous deadly tornadoes,
3 and displaced countless voters less than a month be-
4 fore the November 2024 elections.

5 (11) The United States Election Assistance
6 Commission has published a web page on contin-
7 gency planning to help election officials prepare for
8 unexpected circumstances, including natural and
9 other disasters.

10 (12) The United States Forest Service has de-
11 clared that “[i]n the past 20 years, many States
12 have had record catastrophic wildfires, harming peo-
13 ple, communities and natural resources and causing
14 billions of dollars in damage. In running 5-year av-
15 erage number of structures destroyed by wildfires
16 each year rose from 2,873 in 2014 to 12,255 in
17 2020 – a fourfold increase in just six years”. As
18 these trends continue, the impacts of climate change
19 on American lives and American infrastructure will
20 grow.

21 (13) The National Oceanic and Atmospheric
22 Administration has cautioned that “extreme weather
23 events [caused by climate change] that bring heavy
24 rains, floods, wind, snow, or temperature changes
25 can stress existing structures and facilities. In-

1 creased temperatures require more indoor cooling,
2 which can put stress on an energy grid. Sudden
3 heavy rainfall can lead to flooding that shuts down
4 highways and major business areas”. Each of these
5 factors may strain election infrastructure if they
6 occur during a voting period.

7 (14) The Department of Defense has declared
8 that “[r]ising temperatures, changing precipitation
9 patterns, and more frequent, extreme, and unpre-
10 dictable weather conditions caused by climate change
11 are worsening existing security risks and creating
12 new challenges for the United States”. These secu-
13 rity risks and challenges are amplified when they
14 threaten the elections that form the bedrock of our
15 Republic.

16 (15) The Department of Energy has noted that
17 “severe weather—the leading cause of power outages
18 and fuel supply disruption in the United States—is
19 projected to worsen, with eight of the 10 most de-
20 structive hurricanes of all time having happened in
21 the last 10 years”. The catastrophic effects of severe
22 weather threaten the sanctity of American elections,
23 and we must ensure that our election systems are
24 prepared for worsening climate change-based weath-
25 er events.

1 (16) The Department of the Interior has clari-
2 fied that “the climate crisis disproportionately af-
3 fects underserved communities”. These communities
4 already face significant barriers to the ballot.

5 (17) President Trump’s budget request pro-
6 poses the elimination of the Election Security Grants
7 funding program that supports State and local elec-
8 tion administration, in addition to drastic cuts to the
9 Election Assistance Commission—cuts that would
10 harm States’ ability to conduct secure, safe, and fair
11 elections in the face of natural disasters.

12 (18) It is incumbent upon election administra-
13 tors nationwide to ensure the resiliency of our elec-
14 tions—and through our elections, our very democ-
15 racy—in the face of the worsening climate crisis.

16 **SEC. 3. ENSURING ELECTION ADMINISTRATORS PREPARE**
17 **AND RETAIN CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS**
18 **PLANS FOR USE IN THE EVENT OF DISASTER.**

19 (a) REQUIREMENT.—Title IX of the Help America
20 Vote Act of 2002 (52 U.S.C. 21141 et seq.) is amended
21 by adding at the end the following:

1 **“SEC. 907. CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS PLAN REQUIRE-**
2 **MENT.**

3 “(a) IN GENERAL.—Each State that receives a grant
4 or other payment under this Act after the date of the en-
5 actment of this section—

6 “(1) shall, not later than September 30, 2028,
7 submit to the Commission a continuity of operations
8 plan to ensure the successful administration of elec-
9 tions in the event of disaster, accounting for the dis-
10 asters most likely to occur in the jurisdiction of such
11 recipient, including a major disaster (as defined in
12 section 102 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief
13 and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5122));

14 “(2) shall, not later than September 30, 2033,
15 and not less frequently than every 5 years thereafter
16 until September 30, 2043, update such plan to re-
17 flect evolving risks or changing conditions and
18 promptly submit the updated version of such plan to
19 the Commission;

20 “(3) may, after September 30, 2043, update
21 such plan to reflect evolving risks or changing condi-
22 tions and submit the updated version of such plan
23 to the Commission;

24 “(4) shall retain each plan submitted under
25 paragraph (1), (2), or (3) until the date that is 5

1 years after the date such plan was submitted to the
 2 Commission; and

3 “(5) may coordinate with the Commission,
 4 other States, Tribal governments, units of local gov-
 5 ernment, or other resources or entities when pre-
 6 paring such plan.

7 “(b) PUBLICATION.—The Commission shall dissemi-
 8 nate to the public (through the internet, published reports,
 9 and other methods the Commission considers appropriate)
 10 any continuity of operations plan received pursuant to this
 11 section, except that no information so disseminated may
 12 expose personally identifiable information or endanger na-
 13 tional security, public infrastructure, or public safety.”.

14 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents
 15 of such Act is amended by inserting after the item relating
 16 to section 906 the following new item:

“Sec. 907. Continuity of operations plan requirement.”.

17 **SEC. 4. REPORT ON VOTER REGISTRATION AND FEDERAL**
 18 **ASSISTANCE FOR ELECTION ADMINISTRA-**
 19 **TION IN THE EVENT OF A MAJOR DISASTER.**

20 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the
 21 United States shall conduct—

22 (1) an analysis of the effect of natural disasters
 23 on voter registration rates in areas affected by such
 24 disasters;

1 (2) an analysis of ways that the Federal Gov-
2 ernment may better assist States and units of local
3 government in the administration of elections in the
4 event of a covered major disaster, including the ways
5 existing Federal resources in regions potentially af-
6 fected by such a covered major disaster that are not
7 allocated to life-saving or national security measures
8 should be engaged to support election infrastructure;
9 and

10 (3) a study of legislative authorizations, if any
11 are needed, that Congress may consider to ensure
12 the efficient and effective deployment of emergency
13 resources to support election infrastructure in the
14 event that the President declares a covered major
15 disaster.

16 (b) REPORT.—Not later than September 30, 2026,
17 the Comptroller General shall submit to the Committee
18 on House Administration of the House of Representatives
19 and the Committee on Rules and Administration of the
20 Senate a report on the analysis and study required under
21 subsection (a).

22 (c) LIMITATION ON AUTHORITY.—No provision of
23 this Act may be construed to authorize any power of the
24 Federal Government to seize or hold any ballot or voting
25 machine.

1 **SEC. 5. GRANTS FOR STRENGTHENING AMERICAN ELEC-**
2 **TIONS AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE-DRIVEN**
3 **DISASTERS.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Election Assistance Commis-
5 sion shall make grants to assist States in strengthening
6 the resiliency of State voting systems against potential
7 covered major disasters to improve the quality, reliability,
8 accuracy, accessibility, affordability, and security of voting
9 equipment, election systems, and voting technology.

10 (b) USE OF FUNDS.—A State shall use the funds
11 provided under a grant made under this section to carry
12 out one or more of the following activities:

13 (1) Improving the administration of elections
14 for Federal office with specific regard to disaster
15 preparedness.

16 (2) Educating voters concerning State plans for
17 election administration during or immediately after
18 a covered major disaster.

19 (3) Training election officials, poll workers, and
20 election volunteers with respect to disaster prepared-
21 ness.

22 (4) Developing or publishing the continuity of
23 operation plan required by section 3 of this Act.

24 (5) Improving, acquiring, leasing, modifying, or
25 replacing voting systems and technology and meth-
26 ods for casting and counting votes, provided that

1 such improvements, acquisitions, leases, modifica-
2 tions, or replacements will enhance the resiliency of
3 a Federal election in the State.

4 (6) Establishing or modifying a toll-free hotline
5 that voters may use to obtain information on how
6 and where to vote in the event of a covered major
7 disaster.

8 (c) LIMITATION.—A State may not use the funds pro-
9 vided under a grant made under this section—

10 (1) to pay the costs associated with any litiga-
11 tion, except to the extent that such costs otherwise
12 constitute permitted uses of a grant under this sec-
13 tion;

14 (2) for the payment of any judgment; or

15 (3) for any use that would violate a State or
16 Federal court order.

17 (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
18 are authorized to be appropriated for grants under this
19 section—

20 (1) \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2026;

21 (2) \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2027;

22 (3) \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2028;

23 (4) \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2029; and

24 (5) \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2030.

1 **SEC. 6. DEFINITIONS.**

2 In this Act:

3 (1) COVERED MAJOR DISASTER.—The term
4 “covered major disaster” means a major disaster de-
5 clared by the President during the voting period of
6 a Federal election pursuant to section 401 of the
7 Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency
8 Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170) in response to—

9 (A) a natural catastrophe, including hurri-
10 cane, tornado, storm, high water, wind-driven
11 water, tidal wave, tsunami, earthquake, volcanic
12 eruption, landslide, mudslide, snowstorm, ex-
13 treme heat, and drought;

14 (B) a fire, flood, or explosion, regardless of
15 cause; or

16 (C) an act of terrorism.

17 (2) STATE.—The term “State” has the mean-
18 ing given such term in section 901 of the Help
19 America Vote Act of 2002 (52 U.S.C. 21141).

○