

119TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# S. 3609

To establish a community protection and wildfire resilience grant program,  
and for other purposes.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY 8 (legislative day, JANUARY 7), 2026

Mr. PADILLA (for himself and Mr. SHEEHY) introduced the following bill;  
which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

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## A BILL

To establish a community protection and wildfire resilience  
grant program, 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 “Community Protection  
5 and Wildfire Resilience Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

8 (1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term “Adminis-  
9 trator” means the Administrator of the Federal  
10 Emergency Management Agency.

1           (2) CHIEF.—The term “Chief” means the Chief  
2 of the Forest Service.

3           (3) COMMUNITY PROTECTION AND WILDFIRE  
4 RESILIENCE PLAN.—The term “community protec-  
5 tion and wildfire resilience plan” means a plan  
6 that—

7                   (A) is developed by an eligible entity in co-  
8 ordination with—

9                           (i) the local community and govern-  
10 ment;

11                           (ii) local Indian Tribes;

12                           (iii) local law enforcement, fire-  
13 fighters, first responders, fire managers,  
14 and utilities;

15                           (iv) non-governmental organizations  
16 carrying out relevant projects or relevant  
17 operations locally; and

18                           (v) State agencies responsible for—

19                                   (I) fire prevention and emergency  
20 response;

21                                   (II) other emergency response;

22                                   (III) public safety;

23                                   (IV) environmental protection;

24                                   and

25                                   (V) forest management;

1 (B) includes strategies and activities relat-  
2 ing to—

3 (i) improving early detection tech-  
4 nology, public outreach and education,  
5 alerts and warnings, evacuation planning,  
6 evacuation execution, and access for first  
7 responders;

8 (ii) addressing vulnerable populations,  
9 including the elderly, children, individuals  
10 with disabilities, and homeless individuals;

11 (iii) hardening and increasing the re-  
12 siliency of critical infrastructure and  
13 homes, including through incentive pro-  
14 grams;

15 (iv) applying community-scale defen-  
16 sible space projects, developed collabo-  
17 ratively with the entities described in  
18 clauses (i) through (iii) of subparagraph  
19 (A), across contiguous areas;

20 (v) building local capacity to imple-  
21 ment and oversee the plan;

22 (vi) implementing strategic land use  
23 planning;

1 (vii) educating community members  
2 about ways to improve community resil-  
3 ience;

4 (viii) coordinating any existing wild-  
5 fire plans, such as a community wildfire  
6 protection plan or a community emergency  
7 evacuation plan; and

8 (ix) incorporating information from a  
9 map generated pursuant to section 210(a)  
10 of division O of the Consolidated Appro-  
11 priations Act, 2018 (16 U.S.C. 6501 note;  
12 Public Law 115–141); and

13 (C) may consist of existing plans or other  
14 efforts, provided that any such plan complies  
15 with subparagraphs (A) and (B).

16 (4) CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE.—The term  
17 “critical infrastructure” means any public safety,  
18 health, education, transportation, communications,  
19 or water or power utility infrastructure or any pri-  
20 vate infrastructure necessary to preserve community  
21 safety, resilience, or continuity of operation of such  
22 infrastructure with respect to a wildfire threat.

23 (5) DEFENSIBLE SPACE PROJECT.—The term  
24 “defensible space project”—

1 (A) means a project that is conducted  
2 within a radius of not more than 100 feet  
3 around a home, business, or administrative fa-  
4 cility, and is comprised of vegetation pruning,  
5 such as annual removal of tree seedlings and  
6 saplings, lower limbs of mature trees, cutting of  
7 grasses and reducing density and continuity of  
8 shrubs, and removal of most small twigs and  
9 leaves; or

10 (B) at the discretion of the Administrator,  
11 if a project funded under the program is being  
12 carried out in a State that has established, by  
13 law, a more restrictive definition of the term,  
14 has the meaning given the term in State law.

15 (6) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible enti-  
16 ty” means—

17 (A) a State;

18 (B) an Indian Tribe;

19 (C) a unit of general local or regional gov-  
20 ernment, including a fire protection district or  
21 a municipal fire department;

22 (D) a volunteer fire department; or

23 (E) a collaborative effort of not less than  
24 2 entities described in subparagraphs (A)  
25 through (D).

1 (7) PROGRAM.—The term “program” means  
2 the grant program established under section 3(a).

3 (8) STATE.—The term “State” means a State  
4 of the United States, the District of Columbia,  
5 Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American  
6 Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, and any  
7 other territory or possession of the United States.

8 **SEC. 3. COMMUNITY PROTECTION AND WILDFIRE RESIL-**  
9 **IENCE GRANT PROGRAM.**

10 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 1 year after  
11 the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator, act-  
12 ing through the United States Fire Administrator and in  
13 coordination with the Chief, shall establish a program,  
14 which shall be separate from the program established  
15 under section 203 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Re-  
16 lief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5133),  
17 under which the Administrator shall award grants to eligi-  
18 ble entities to—

19 (1) in the case of an eligible entity that has a  
20 community protection and wildfire resilience plan,  
21 carry out projects described in the community pro-  
22 tection and wildfire resilience plan of the eligible en-  
23 tity in accordance with subsection (c); or

24 (2) in the case of an eligible entity that does  
25 not have a community protection and wildfire resil-

1        ience plan, develop a community protection and wild-  
 2        fire resilience plan in accordance with subsection (d).

3        (b) CRITERIA FOR GRANTS.—

4            (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after  
 5        the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator,  
 6        acting through the United States Fire Administrator  
 7        and in coordination with the Chief, shall establish  
 8        criteria to award grants under the program.

9            (2) COMMUNITIES.—Amounts provided under  
 10       the program shall be used to conduct projects and  
 11       activities only in communities in existence on the  
 12       date of enactment of this Act.

13          (3) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under the  
 14       program, the Administrator shall give priority to eli-  
 15       gible entities that will carry out projects or plans  
 16       supporting a community located in an area with a  
 17       high risk for fire or wildfire, as evidenced by a State  
 18       wildfire hazard map or a map generated pursuant to  
 19       section 210(a) of division O of the Consolidated Ap-  
 20       propriations Act, 2018 (16 U.S.C. 6501 note; Public  
 21       Law 115–141).

22        (c) COMMUNITY PROTECTION AND WILDFIRE RESIL-  
 23       IENCE GRANTS.—

24            (1) USE OF GRANT FUNDS.—An eligible entity  
 25       that receives a grant under the program to carry out

1 projects shall use grant funds to carry out projects  
 2 that support a diverse portfolio of community pro-  
 3 tection and wildfire resilience strategies described in  
 4 the community protection and wildfire resilience plan  
 5 of the eligible entity.

6 (2) GRANT AMOUNTS.—A grant under this sub-  
 7 section shall be for not more than \$10,000,000.

8 (d) COMMUNITY PROTECTION AND WILDFIRE RESIL-  
 9 IENCE PLAN DEVELOPMENT GRANTS.—

10 (1) USE OF GRANT FUNDS.—An eligible entity  
 11 that receives a grant under the program to develop  
 12 a plan shall use grant funds to develop a community  
 13 protection and wildfire resilience plan for the eligible  
 14 entity.

15 (2) GRANT AMOUNTS.—An award under this  
 16 subsection shall be for not more than \$250,000.

17 (e) PREFERENCE FOR LOCAL CONTRACTORS AND  
 18 LABOR.—In carrying out a project using a grant awarded  
 19 under the program, the grant recipient shall, to the max-  
 20 imum extent practicable, give preference to contracting  
 21 with entities, and hiring individuals, from the area in  
 22 which the project is being carried out, including by  
 23 partnering with local corps groups, such as AmeriCorps  
 24 or a conservation corps.

25 (f) COST-SHARING.—



1           (1) NON-FEDERAL SHARE REQUIREMENT.—The  
2           non-Federal share of the cost (including the admin-  
3           istrative cost) of carrying out a project using funds  
4           from a grant awarded under the program—

5                   (A)(i) shall be not less than 25 percent of  
6           the cost of the project to be carried out using  
7           grant funds in accordance with subsection (c);  
8           and

9                   (ii) shall be 0 percent of the cost of the  
10          project to be carried out using grant funds in  
11          accordance with subsection (d);

12          (B) may be provided by—

13                   (i) a State, a unit of local government,  
14           an Indian Tribe, a nonprofit organization,  
15           private industry, or a combination of those  
16           entities; or

17                   (ii) volunteer hours and in-kind dona-  
18           tions; and

19          (C) may, in the case of a project that  
20          serves a low-income community, be in the form  
21          of a low-interest Federal loan to the eligible en-  
22          tity carrying out the project through the Com-  
23          munity Disaster Loan program authorized  
24          under section 417 of the Robert T. Stafford

1 Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act  
2 (42 U.S.C. 5184).

3 (2) WAIVER; REDUCTION.—In carrying out the  
4 program, the Administrator may waive or reduce the  
5 non-Federal share amount required under paragraph  
6 (1).

7 (g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There  
8 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out the pro-  
9 gram \$1,000,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2025  
10 through 2029.

11 **SEC. 4. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE REPORT.**

12 Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment  
13 of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States  
14 shall publish a report—

15 (1) on authorities and programs of the Federal  
16 Government that are available to protect commu-  
17 nities from wildfires; and

18 (2) that includes an assessment of the Comp-  
19 troller General with respect to impediments to the  
20 implementation of such programs, including gaps in  
21 funding.

22 **SEC. 5. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE STUDY.**

23 Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment  
24 of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States  
25 shall publish a study that includes—

1 (1) an assessment of the Comptroller General  
2 with respect to—

3 (A) the potential for a community protec-  
4 tion and wildfire resilience plan to qualify for a  
5 certification identifying a level of wildfire sur-  
6 vivability and resilience; and

7 (B) methods that could be used by the  
8 Federal Government to incentivize insurance  
9 companies to accept a certification described in  
10 subparagraph (A); and

11 (2) an identification of any metrics that could  
12 be provided to insurance companies as assurance  
13 that a community has wildfire resilience measures in  
14 place.

15 **SEC. 6. UPDATING LIST OF AT-RISK COMMUNITIES.**

16 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subparagraph (A) of section  
17 101(1) of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003  
18 (16 U.S.C. 6511(1)(A)) is amended to read as follows:

19 “(A) that is comprised of a group of homes  
20 and other structures with basic infrastructure  
21 and services (such as utilities and collectively  
22 maintained transportation routes) within or ad-  
23 jacent to Federal land;”.

24 (b) MAP.—Not later than 180 days after the date of  
25 enactment of this Act, and every 5 years thereafter, the

1 Administrator, acting through the United States Fire Ad-  
 2 ministrator and in coordination with the Chief, shall de-  
 3 velop and publish a map depicting at-risk communities (as  
 4 defined in section 101 of the Healthy Forests Restoration  
 5 Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6511), as amended by this sec-  
 6 tion), including Tribal at-risk communities.

7 **SEC. 7. REPORT ON RADIO COMMUNICATIONS.**

8 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 2 years after the  
 9 date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator, acting  
 10 through the United States Fire Administrator and in co-  
 11 ordination with the Chief, shall prepare a report relating  
 12 to insufficient radio frequencies, barriers to interoper-  
 13 ability of radio frequencies, and available products and  
 14 technologies for overcoming barriers to interoperability for  
 15 wildfire management.

16 (b) COOPERATION.—In preparing the report under  
 17 subsection (a), the Administrator shall coordinate with—

18 (1) the Secretary of Agriculture;

19 (2) agencies responsible for the management of  
 20 Federal land;

21 (3) State fire marshals;

22 (4) State and local emergency response agen-  
 23 cies;

24 (5) Tribal fire departments and emergency  
 25 managers; and

1           (6) municipal fire departments, fire protection  
2           districts, and volunteer fire departments in relevant  
3           communities.

4           (c) COMPATIBILITY; ADDITIONAL FREQUENCIES.—

5   The report under subsection (a) shall include—

6           (1) a determination on whether the entities de-  
7           scribed in subsection (b) have the ability to commu-  
8           nicate by way of radio during a potential fire sup-  
9           pression effort for a community conflagration;

10          (2) a determination on whether—

11                (A) the reserved radio frequencies are suf-  
12                ficient for wildfire management; or

13                (B) additional frequencies, listed by type  
14                and location, are recommended to be reserved  
15                or obtained;

16          (3) an analysis of commercially available tech-  
17          nology and products to enable radios from multiple  
18          agencies operating on different radio frequencies to  
19          be interoperable; and

20          (4) if the Administrator determines under para-  
21          graph (1) that any entities do not have the ability  
22          to communicate, a plan for ensuring such entities  
23          would be able to communicate adequately during a  
24          fire suppression effort for a community conflagra-  
25          tion.

1 **SEC. 8. AMENDMENT TO COMMUNITY WILDFIRE DEFENSE**  
2 **GRANT PROGRAM TO ALLOW STRUCTURE**  
3 **HARDENING.**

4 Section 40803(f) of the Infrastructure Investment  
5 and Jobs Act (16 U.S.C. 6592(f)) is amended—

6 (1) in paragraph (1)(B), by striking “projects”  
7 and inserting “projects (including projects described  
8 in paragraph (3)(D))”; and

9 (2) in paragraph (3), by adding at the end the  
10 following:

11 “(D) PROJECTS DESCRIBED.—A project  
12 referred to in paragraph (1)(B) is a project for  
13 any of the following:

14 “(i) The construction, modification, or  
15 maintenance of a structure to make the  
16 structure resistant to the intrusion of  
17 flames or embers.

18 “(ii) The modification of a structure  
19 or an area adjacent to a structure (includ-  
20 ing vegetation and miscellaneous struc-  
21 tures, such as garages, sheds, and fencing)  
22 if such modification is carried out—

23 “(I) to reduce the exposure of the  
24 structure to direct contact from  
25 flames, radiation, or embers from  
26 wildfire; and

1                   “(II) with consideration for the  
2                   potential effects on the structure of  
3                   nearby combustible features (including  
4                   vegetation, vehicles, and miscellaneous  
5                   structures, such as garages, sheds,  
6                   and fencing).”.

○