

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 3970

To exempt from the requirements of NEPA the provision of certain assistance for the construction or modification of residential housing on infill sites, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 3, 2026

Mr. RICKETTS introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works

A BILL

To exempt from the requirements of NEPA the provision of certain assistance for the construction or modification of residential housing on infill sites, 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 “Rural Housing Regu-
5 latory Relief Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. APPLICABILITY OF NEPA TO THE PROVISION OF**
2 **CERTAIN ASSISTANCE FOR THE CONSTRUC-**
3 **TION OR MODIFICATION OF RESIDENTIAL**
4 **HOUSING ON INFILL SITES.**

5 (a) EXEMPTION.—Providing assistance under section
6 501, 502, 504, 515, 533, or 538 of the Housing Act of
7 1949 (42 U.S.C. 1471, 1472, 1474, 1485, 1490m, or
8 1490p–2) for the construction or modification of residen-
9 tial housing located on an infill site may not be considered
10 a major Federal action under section 102(2)(C) of the Na-
11 tional Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C.
12 4332(2)(C)).

13 (b) REPORT.—Not later than the date that is 5 years
14 after the date of enactment of this section, the Secretary
15 of Agriculture shall submit to Congress a report that—

16 (1) determines whether the implementation of
17 this section—

18 (A) reduced the amount of time it takes to
19 review an application for assistance described in
20 subsection (a); and

21 (B) reduced the administrative cost of pro-
22 viding such assistance;

23 (2) describes how the implementation of this
24 section affects the affordable housing sector in rural
25 America; and

1 (3) includes any recommendations from the
 2 Secretary of Agriculture for future congressional ac-
 3 tion regarding revisions to categorical exclusions or
 4 exemptions from the requirements of the National
 5 Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321
 6 et seq.) related to the provision of assistance de-
 7 scribed in subsection (a).

8 (c) SAVINGS CLAUSE.—This section does not affect
 9 any requirement under any law other than the National
 10 Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et
 11 seq.).

12 (d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

13 (1) GREENFIELD.—The term “greenfield”
 14 means a site that has not been developed, including
 15 a woodland, farmland, and an open field.

16 (2) INFILL SITE.—The term “infill site”—

17 (A) means a site that is served by existing
 18 infrastructure, including water lines, sewer
 19 lines, and roads; and

20 (B) does not include—

21 (i) a site that is served by existing in-
 22 frastructure that only consists of a road;

23 (ii) a site within a census tract des-
 24 ignated as very high or relatively high risk
 25 for wildfire, coastal flooding, and riverine

1 flooding under the National Risk Index of
2 the Federal Emergency Management
3 Agency pursuant to section 206 of the
4 Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and
5 Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C.
6 5136); and
7 (iii) a greenfield.

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