

delays in recovery and reimbursement. Such a response to any disaster is unacceptable, and change is necessary.

As I work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, I have learned that these issues are not unique to central Missouri. I have worked diligently with Chairman BARLETTA in crafting this bill to call attention to and to rectify FEMA's shortcomings.

This legislation is designed to address the deficiencies of the FEMA response to the 2013 flooding in my district to ensure future disaster recoveries in Missouri and elsewhere are as painless and efficient as possible.

Specifically, this bill requires FEMA to create an action plan to address inconsistent guidance, to establish appropriate recordkeeping procedures, and to improve overall assistance to local officials.

Additionally, this simple bill directs FEMA to issue a forward-looking report to identify new technologies that could further aid the disaster workforce in partnering with private nonprofits as well as State and local governments in the wake of a disaster or an emergency.

FEMA processes need to be streamlined and consistent in order to help those recovering from a disaster feel supported and assured relief will come in a timely, efficient manner.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to bring the certainty and the assurances of quick relief to all of our constituents because they deserve the best. I ask my colleagues to join me in support of H.R. 1117, the FEMA Relief Improvement Act, which passed by voice vote out of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in February.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Chairmen SHUSTER and BARLETTA and Ranking Members DEFazio and JOHNSON, as well as their staffs, for working with me in this bipartisan, common-sense effort to make the people get the help and assistance they so desperately need in times of crisis.

Mr. Speaker, again, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1117.

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 1117.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BARLETTA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1117, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

DISASTER SIMPLIFIED ASSISTANCE VALUE ENHANCEMENT ACT

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1214) to require the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to conduct a program to use simplified procedures to issue public assistance for certain projects under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1214

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Disaster Simplified Assistance Value Enhancement Act" or the "Disaster SAVE Act".

SEC. 2. SIMPLIFIED PROCEDURE PROGRAM.

(a) THRESHOLD.—The Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency shall immediately establish the threshold for eligibility pursuant to section 422(b)(2) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5189(b)(2)) at \$500,000.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than May 1, 2021, the Administrator shall submit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate a report containing the results of a comprehensive review of the program conducted under section 422 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5189), as modified by this section, to include an assessment of cost-effectiveness, speed of recovery, capacity of the grantees, past performance, and accountability measures.

(c) SUNSET.—This Act shall expire on September 30, 2021.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BARLETTA) and the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFazio) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1214, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of H.R. 1214, the Disaster SAVE Act, is to speed up small disaster reconstruction projects and lower their costs by removing red tape.

One of my biggest priorities since becoming chairman of the subcommittee has been reducing disaster costs and losses and reducing disaster risks. I was mayor for 11 years, and I saw so many friends' and neighbors' businesses and communities impacted by disasters.

One of the things I hear most often from my colleagues in Congress is frustration about inconsistent guidance from FEMA and funding take backs, even when there is no evidence of misuse. If you have ever had a big disaster in your district, you know exactly what I am talking about.

In my district, FEMA reversed its prior approval and has been fighting for years with the local government over whether or not they should have paved a temporary access road that was built after a major flood. The cost of the gravel road was \$230,000. The extra cost to pave it, which the community covered with its own funds, was about \$50,000.

The amount of money FEMA has wasted in salaries, administration, and legal fees trying to take back the \$230,000 likely exceeds the entire project cost. This is red tape out of control, and it doesn't serve the taxpayers well. We know there is a better way to manage these projects.

Under current law, FEMA runs projects under \$130,000 in a manner similar to an insurance settlement. FEMA reviews the damage, makes a cost estimate, and issues a repair grant. The local government is responsible for managing the grant on time and on budget.

In exchange, they have greater flexibility in how they bill back, and they can enhance a project with their own funds. This approach dramatically cuts administrative costs, rebuilds infrastructure faster, eliminates the cost overruns for Federal taxpayers, and gives local governments the flexibility to rebuild in a way that best meets their needs.

The success of FEMA's small project program is well proven thanks to the prior efforts of the Transportation Committee. The former chairman of the subcommittee, from California, worked diligently to give FEMA the flexibility to administratively increase the small project threshold, which finally passed as part of the Hurricane Sandy supplemental package.

H.R. 2114, the Disaster SAVE Act, will raise the current project cap for this program from \$130,000 to \$500,000 and help all of our constituents avoid the project nightmare my district is experiencing right now. This will speed up rebuilding efforts and reduce disaster recovery costs.

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The vast majority of FEMA's rebuilding projects are less than \$500,000, but FEMA continues to micromanage the administration of these projects at a tremendous cost in time and money. FEMA testified in 2015 that increasing this threshold would result in lower administrative costs, faster project completions, and fewer deobligations.

After 4 years, the program will sunset and Congress will decide, based on outcomes, lessons learned, and stakeholder input, if the program should continue or not. The House adopted

similar language last year when it passed the FEMA Disaster Assistance Reform Act.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

FEMA provides public assistance funds after a disaster or emergency to State, tribal, and local governments and some private nonprofits. These funds reimburse communities and other entities for activities such as debris removal costs, emergency protective measures, and the repair or replacement of disaster-damaged facilities.

Currently, for projects under—however they chose that number—\$122,100—I am surprised they didn't add on 10 cents—reimburses grantees based on cost estimates rather than actual costs. This bill would require FEMA to increase this threshold to \$500,000. This would be temporary authority, expiring on September 30, 2021. We would require that this be closely tracked. There is a strong indication that this will actually expedite reimbursement, ultimately save funds, and will not subject these projects to abuse.

I am hopeful that my colleagues will support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, again, I urge my colleagues to vote “yes” on H.R. 1214, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BARLETTA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1214, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST EARTHQUAKE PREPAREDNESS ACT OF 2017

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 654) to direct the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to carry out a plan for the purchase and installation of an earthquake early warning system for the Cascadia Subduction Zone, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 654

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; DEFINITION.

(a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This Act may be cited as the “Pacific Northwest Earthquake Preparedness Act of 2017”.

(b) **CASCADIA SUBDUCTION ZONE DEFINED.**—In this Act, the term “Cascadia Subduction Zone” means the landward-dipping fault that is ap-

proximately 684 miles long, separates the Juan de Fuca and North America plates, and stretches along a portion of the western coast of the United States beginning off Cape Mendocino, California, along the State of Oregon, the State of Washington, to Northern Vancouver Island, British Columbia.

SEC. 2. EARTHQUAKE EARLY WARNING SYSTEM FOR CASCADIA SUBDUCTION ZONE.

(a) **PLAN FOR PURCHASE AND INSTALLATION.**—
(1) **DEVELOPMENT AND FUNDING.**—The Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency shall—

(A) develop a plan for the purchase and installation of an earthquake early warning system for the Cascadia Subduction Zone; and

(B) identify the funds necessary for implementation of the plan.

(2) **SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS.**—Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a copy of the plan.

(b) **REPORT TO CONGRESS.**—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report that summarizes the actions taken to implement the plan.

(c) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section, the following definitions apply:

(1) **APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS.**—The term “appropriate committees of Congress” means the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate.

(2) **EARTHQUAKE EARLY WARNING SYSTEM.**—The term “earthquake early warning system” includes—

(A) improvements to regional and geodetic networks that support building a capability for an earthquake early warning system; and

(B) seismometers, Global Positioning System receivers, and associated infrastructure.

SEC. 3. EARTHQUAKE AND TSUNAMI TASK FORCE.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The President shall establish an Earthquake and Tsunami Task Force for the purpose of developing a comprehensive strategy and recommendations on how the Nation should prepare and plan for, mitigate against, respond to, recover from, and more successfully adapt to a covered event in the Cascadia Subduction Zone.

(b) **TASK FORCE.**—

(1) **MEMBERSHIP.**—The membership of the Task Force shall include a cross section of subject matter experts representing the following:

(A) Relevant Federal agencies.

(B) The States of Oregon, Washington, and California.

(C) Indian tribes, local governments, and private sector representatives that may be impacted by a covered event in the Cascadia Subduction Zone.

(D) Universities, academia, and research institutions with expertise in topics relevant to the work of the Task Force.

(2) **CHAIRPERSON.**—The Administrator (or the Administrator's designee) shall serve as the chairperson of the Task Force.

(3) **DETAILED EMPLOYEES.**—Members of the Task Force may detail employees to assist the Administrator (or the Administrator's designee) in fulfilling the responsibilities of the Task Force.

(c) **COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY.**—

(1) **STRATEGY.**—The comprehensive strategy to be developed under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(A) A description of how Federal agencies will coordinate to develop the ability to prepare and plan for, mitigate against, respond to, recover from, and more successfully adapt to the impacts of a covered event in the Cascadia Subduction Zone.

(B) A strategy to ensure collaboration between the Department of Transportation, the Depart-

ment of Energy, the Coast Guard, the Corps of Engineers, and other Federal agencies, as appropriate, for purposes of—

(i) completing a needs assessment of Federal facilities in need of hardening for a covered event; and

(ii) developing a strategic plan to mitigate and retrofit Federal, State, tribal, and local critical assets for freight, energy, and transit purposes to withstand a covered event and to help save lives during and immediately after a covered event.

(C) **A strategy—**

(i) to assist State, tribal, and local governments in developing and implementing a coordinated and comprehensive plan to prioritize Federal, State, tribal, local, and private investments and activities to develop the ability to prepare and plan for, mitigate against, respond to, recover from, and more successfully adapt to the impacts of a covered event in the Cascadia Subduction Zone; and

(ii) to link any existing statewide mitigation plan with such a coordinated and comprehensive plan.

(D) With respect to the strategy described in subparagraph (C), an examination of the feasibility of the public sector, the private sector, and individuals to acquire earthquake insurance.

(E) An identification of funding opportunities to implement the comprehensive strategy and any recommendations made by the Task Force, including—

(i) existing funding opportunities across Federal agencies and other sources; and

(ii) potential new funding opportunities.

(F) An identification of barriers to obtaining funding for the implementation of the comprehensive strategy and recommendations on how to remove the barriers.

(G) A strategy for appropriate Federal agencies to collaborate with and assist State, tribal, and local governments in developing recommendations for cost-effective mitigation alternatives for aging State, tribal, and locally owned critical infrastructure.

(H) A strategy for assisting State, tribal, and local governments in developing a recovery plan prior to a covered event in the Cascadia Subduction Zone that addresses how State, tribal, and local governments may want to rebuild after the event.

(I) An identification of the steps taken to date to develop an onshore and offshore earthquake early warning system and a description of the purpose and scope of such a system.

(J) An evaluation of the types of offshore earthquake early warning systems and recommendations and a cost estimate for an earthquake early warning system appropriate for the Cascadia Subduction Zone.

(K) Recommendations on how an earthquake early warning system should operate, including whether and how the system should interface with the private sector.

(L) A description of appropriate roles and responsibilities for Federal, State, local, and tribal governments, including who should operate and maintain an earthquake early warning system, the cost of the system, and possible funding sources for the system.

(M) A plan on how to integrate an earthquake early warning system into existing and new public alert warning systems and technologies, including mobile systems.

(2) **USE OF EXISTING PLANS.**—In developing the comprehensive strategy, the Task Force may use existing plans, studies, and other resources.

(d) **RECOMMENDATIONS.**—The recommendations to be developed by the Task Force under subsection (a) shall include recommendations on—

(1) potential administrative or legislative changes required to implement the comprehensive strategy;

(2) the funding required to implement the comprehensive strategy and the recommendations; and