

Columbia (Ms. NORTON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5953, 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.

PRELIMINARY DAMAGE ASSESSMENT IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2020

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4358) to direct the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to submit to Congress a report on preliminary damage assessment and to establish damage assessment teams in the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4358

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 "Preliminary Damage Assessment Improvement Act of 2020".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) Preliminary damage assessments play a critical role in assessing and validating the impact and magnitude of a disaster.

(2) Through the preliminary damage assessment process, representatives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency validate information gathered by State and local officials that serves as the basis for disaster assistance requests.

(3) Various factors can impact the duration of a preliminary damage assessment and the corresponding submission of a major disaster request, however, the average time between when a disaster occurs, and the submission of a corresponding disaster request has been found to be approximately twenty days longer for flooding disasters.

(4) With communities across the country facing increased instances of catastrophic flooding and other extreme weather events, accurate and efficient preliminary damage assessments have become critically important to the relief process for impacted states and municipalities.

SEC. 3. REPORT TO CONGRESS.

(a) *IN GENERAL.*—Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency shall submit to Congress a report describing the preliminary damage assessment process, as supported by the Federal Emergency Management Agency in the 5 years before the date of enactment of this Act.

(b) *CONTENTS.*—The report described in subsection (a) shall contain the following:

(1) The process of the Federal Emergency Management Agency for deploying personnel to support preliminary damage assessments.

(2) The number of Agency staff participating on disaster assessment teams.

(3) The training and experience of such staff described in paragraph (2).

(4) A calculation of the average amount of time disaster assessment teams described in paragraph (1) are deployed to a disaster area.

(5) The efforts of the Agency to maintain a consistent liaison between the Agency and State, local, Tribal, and territorial officials within a disaster area.

SEC. 4. PRELIMINARY DAMAGE ASSESSMENT.

(a) *IN GENERAL.*—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency shall establish a training regime under section 206.33(b) of title 44, Code of Federal Regulations, within the Federal Emergency Management Agency to ensure preliminary damage assessments are conducted and reviewed under consistent guidelines.

(b) *ANNUAL REPORT.*—The Administrator shall annually submit to Congress a report on the number and type of instances under which Federal Emergency Management Agency personnel have overturned decisions made by personnel in the field.

(c) *REPORT TO CONGRESS.*—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall submit to Congress a report—

(1) describing the establishment of disaster guidelines from Federal Emergency Management Agency personnel described under subsection (a);

(2) assessing whether the duration of the deployment of Federal Emergency Management Agency personnel to conduct a preliminary damage assessment is longer based on specific disaster conditions; and

(3) containing legislative recommendations to improve the operation, deployment, and staffing of disaster personnel.

(d) *DEFINITION OF STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT.*—For purposes of this Act, the terms "State" and "local government" have the meanings given such terms in section 102 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5122).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GRAVES) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. NORTON. 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. 4358, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 4358, as amended, the Preliminary Damage Assessment Improvement Act of 2020, introduced by Mr. KATKO from New York.

H.R. 4358, as amended, would direct the Federal Emergency Management Agency to produce a report examining the preliminary damage assessment, or PDA, process and establish a more consistent training regime for FEMA personnel to effectively support these assessments at State, local, Tribal, and territorial units of government.

FEMA uses PDA findings in the wake of a disaster to determine the extent of damage and the subsequent unmet needs of individuals, businesses, and the public sector in the affected community.

This bill would ensure greater consistency for PDAs across FEMA's 10 regions by creating a training program with a goal of ensuring that data col-

lected and reviewed is done in a more consistent manner.

As communities across the country experience more extreme weather events, timely and consistent PDAs have never been more important to the recovery process of disaster-declared areas.

Mr. Speaker, I support this legislation and ask my colleagues to do the same, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 4358 is going to improve consistency in FEMA's preliminary damage assessments to better help communities hit by disaster.

Inconsistencies in FEMA training and personnel on the ground following a disaster often slow the recovery process down dramatically. This bill is going to help ensure that there is more consistency within FEMA to support State and local communities as they navigate the preliminary damage assessment process to determine eligibility for assistance.

Ultimately, the bill is about helping Americans impacted by disasters to get the help that they need sooner and more reliably.

I want to thank Ranking Member KATKO for his leadership and work on this piece of legislation.

I urge support for the bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New York (Mr. KATKO).

Mr. KATKO. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to be the sponsor of H.R. 4358, the Preliminary Damage Assessment Improvement Act, along with the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CUNNINGHAM).

Preliminary damage assessments, or PDAs, play a critical role in assessing and validating the impact of a disaster. PDAs establish a foundation for further assistance requests and are essential to the overall disaster relief process.

Inaccurate PDAs can impact the types of Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, assistance available to communities following a disaster.

Although FEMA is currently required to designate officials to support States and local communities in the PDA process, inconsistencies and turnovers in staffing can endanger access to critical relief. H.R. 4358 requires FEMA to report on FEMA's role in the PDA process, including staffing and training.

The bill also directs FEMA to take measures to ensure FEMA teams involved in damage assessments are appropriately trained and consistent. Whether FEMA is responding to flooding in my district on Lake Ontario's southern shore, which happens often,

or hurricanes in South Carolina's Lowcountry or natural disasters in any other impacted community nationwide, consistency and dependability are crucial.

I want to thank the American Flood Coalition for working with Representative CUNNINGHAM and me on this important legislation.

In closing, H.R. 4358 will help communities across the country recover from disasters by improving the consistency, dependability, and accuracy in the preliminary damage assessment process for FEMA disaster relief.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support of this legislation.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 4358, as I mentioned earlier, is going to improve FEMA support for communities that have been hit by disasters by ensuring more consistency in the preliminary damage assessment process.

This bill will provide much better and faster government assistance to those whose lives have been impacted by floods, by hurricanes, and by so many other disasters that we see.

Again, I want to thank and I want to commend the gentleman from New York (Mr. KATKO) for his leadership on this issue.

I urge support of this important legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4358, 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.

HOUSING SURVIVORS OF MAJOR DISASTERS ACT OF 2020

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2914) to make available necessary disaster assistance for families affected by major disasters, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2914

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 "Housing Survivors of Major Disasters Act of 2020".

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) **FEMA.**—The term "FEMA" means the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

(2) **ADMINISTRATOR.**—The term "Administrator" means the Administrator of FEMA.

SEC. 3. ELIGIBILITY FOR AND USE OF DISASTER ASSISTANCE.

(a) **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.**—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, individuals and households described in subsection (c) may be eligible for assistance made available under section 408 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5174) in connection with a major disaster declared by the President under section 401 of such Act (42 U.S.C. 5170), including Hurricane Maria of 2017.

(b) **USE OF FUNDS.**—Any assistance provided pursuant to subsection (a) may include costs relating to obtaining title for a property described in subsection (c)(1), including the cost of land surveys and any other taxes or fees associated with obtaining the title for such property.

(c) **ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS OR HOUSEHOLDS.**—With respect to a major disaster declared by the President under section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170), an individual or household described in this subsection is an individual or household who—

(1) is residing on a property located in the area for which the major disaster was declared but does not have documented ownership rights to such property and is not renting such property; or

(2) is or was residing in an area for which a major disaster has been declared by the President under section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170), during the designated incident period, including residing in any housing accommodation or property upon which a housing accommodation is located, including any living quarters, board-in-house, bunkhouse, manufactured home, mobile home, or travel trailer.

(d) **EVIDENCE.**—

(1) **CONSIDERATION.**—In making a determination to provide assistance pursuant to this Act, the Administrator shall consider a wide range of evidence.

(2) **ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF EVIDENCE.**—In determining if an individual or household is eligible for assistance pursuant to this Act, the Administrator shall accept either a declarative statement or the presentation of at least one item of alternative evidence, including the following:

(A) A utility (including gas, electric, sewer, or water) bill with the name and address of the individual.

(B) A merchant's statement (including a credit card, delivery notice, or first class mail) with the name and address of the individual.

(C) A pay stub from an employer with the name and address of the individual.

(D) A current driver's license or State-issued identification card of the individual.

(E) The deed or title for the applicable property.

(F) A mortgage payment booklet or another mortgage document.

(G) Property title of mobile home certificate of title.

(H) A real estate property tax receipt.

(I) A school registration containing the address of self, child, or children.

(J) A will and testament with the name and address of the individual.

(K) In a State that does not require a will and testament for the transfer of immovable property, a death certificate and birth certificate that establishes an automatic transfer of legal ownership.

(L) Medical records that list the name and address of the individual.

(M) A charitable donation receipt that list the name and address of the individual.

(N) Any other documentation, certification, identification, or proof of occupancy or ownership not included on this list that

can reasonably link the individual requesting assistance to the applicable property.

(e) **APPLICABILITY.**—This section shall apply to funds appropriated on or after the date of enactment of this Act.

SEC. 4. DECLARATIVE STATEMENT.

(a) **DEVELOPMENT OF DECLARATIVE STATEMENT.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 30 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall create, in coordination with the appropriate authorities of the applicable jurisdiction, and distribute, where necessary, a declarative statement form that an applicant for assistance provided pursuant to section 3 may use to self-certify such applicant's eligibility for assistance pursuant to this Act.

(2) **PROHIBITION OF NOTARIZATION.**—The Administrator may not require the declarative statement form created under paragraph (1) to require notarization by the applicant.

(b) **EXEMPTIONS.**—A declarative statement form created under subsection (a)(1) is exempt from publication notice, public comment periods, and agency information collection review and approval by the Office of Management and Budget required by the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. 3501 et seq.).

(c) **GUIDANCE.**—Not later than 30 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall provide written notification and guidance to employees of FEMA regarding the requirements of this Act.

(d) **PUBLICATION.**—Not later than 30 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall—

(1) make the declarative statement form created under subsection (a)(1) available in Spanish and English at all active Disaster Recovery Centers; and

(2) publish in English, Spanish, and any other locally predominant languages on the website of FEMA and on social media the declarative statement form and instructions on how applicants can reopen or seek further appeal of relevant determinations.

(e) **PAST DISASTERS.**—For applicants of assistance provided pursuant to section 3 since January 1, 2017, the Administrator shall provide an applicant not fewer than 180 days to submit the declarative statement form to reopen or appeal a case after such applicant has received notice of the right to do so.

SEC. 5. REPAIR AND REBUILDING.

Section 408(c) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5174) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (2)(A)(i) by striking "to a safe and sanitary living or functioning condition" and inserting "to ensure that such residences are habitable during longer term recovery (including through coordination with other sources for repair and rebuilding of such residences)"; and

(2) in paragraph (4) by striking "in cases in which" and all that follows through the end and inserting "if the President determines such assistance is a cost effective alternative to other housing solutions, including the costs associated with temporary housing provided under this section.".

SEC. 6. POST-DISASTER HOUSING ASSISTANCE ANALYSIS AND REPORT.

(a) **ANALYSIS.**—The Administrator, in coordination with the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, shall conduct an analysis comparing the costs, benefits, and effectiveness of assistance provided under the Disaster Housing Assistance Program, including any case management services provided, with other temporary housing options provided by the Administrator under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.).

(b) **PROVISION OF DATA.**—The Secretary shall ensure that public housing authorities