

effectiveness of local, State, and Federal emergency alerting systems in disseminating timely and relevant information during weather-related emergencies to help communities develop better policies and procedures for emergency response and enhance public safety in the event of a weather-related emergency.

(b) CONTENTS.—In conducting the study under subsection (a), the Comptroller General shall—

(1) evaluate the efficacy of various alert mediums, including platforms such as social media, to disseminate emergency alerts, including travel bans and mass power outages, during extreme weather events;

(2) assess the extent that guidance and training exists for developing alert content, such as ensuring alerts are clear, relevant, and provide the public with actionable information; and

(3) determine whether improvements could be made to public alerting based on input from a selected sample of emergency managers, local officials, and community groups.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General shall submit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and the Committee on Homeland Security of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate a report on the study conducted under subsection (a).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. GRAVES) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. LARSEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Louisiana.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material on H.R. 2892.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2892, also known as the WARN Act, directs GAO to conduct a study on the effectiveness of local, State, and Federal emergency alerting systems in disseminating timely and relevant information during weather-related emergencies.

By examining these alerting systems, we can better understand how to improve communication and public safety during emergencies.

I thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. LANGWORTHY) for his work on this critical piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support of the legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2892. The bill directs the GAO, or Government Accountability Office, to study the efficacy of local weather alerting systems.

As the climate crisis worsens and extreme weather events strike our communities with increasing frequency and severity, frontline communities need

time to prepare and react in the face of these dangers.

Every wasted second endangers lives. That is why local weather alerting systems are an indispensable tool. They give communities the time needed to take decisive and lifesaving action. Understanding how best to leverage, develop, and improve this important tool will help ensure community preparedness.

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

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. LANGWORTHY), the author of this legislation.

Mr. LANGWORTHY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2892, the Weather Alert Response and Notification Act, also known as the WARN Act, to improve public safety during extreme weather events.

I am proud to lead this bipartisan bill that would direct the Comptroller General to evaluate the effectiveness of our emergency alert systems—at the local, State, and Federal levels—in reaching our communities when it matters the most.

I introduced this legislation after my district experienced tragedy during Winter Storm Elliott in December 2022, right before Christmas Eve. Western New York and the southern tier are used to heavy snowfall every winter. During Winter Storm Elliott, we were hit with whiteout blizzards and hurricane-force winds that quickly dumped more than 4 feet of snow.

People were trapped in their cars for days. Many were trapped in their homes without power or heat. Rescue crews struggled to get those people rescued who were in need, leading to more than 40 deaths in our region. Some of these deaths could have been prevented, but local warning systems failed to adequately communicate the risks to the public. We cannot let this happen again.

That is where the WARN Act comes in. Whether it is a blizzard, hurricane, tornado, or other severe weather event, we must ensure that our emergency alert systems are timely, accurate, and capable of reaching everyone, no matter what technology they have.

Preparation is the key to protecting lives and minimizing damage during these crises. Reliable and effective emergency alerts give individuals the opportunity to act—keeping themselves and their families safe, clearing the way for first responders, and ensuring repair crews can restore power, clear roads, and respond more quickly in emergencies. This preparation helps save lives and reduces long-term harm. The WARN Act will examine cutting-edge technologies, such as mobile alerts, satellite communication, and next-generation platforms, to determine how we can improve these life-saving systems.

It will also provide critical insights to local emergency managers and

elected officials, who are often on the front lines of these crises.

As we are heading into 2025, we have more technology than ever at our fingertips, but we need to make sure it is employed in the right way to help us get through extreme weather events. By equipping our communities with clear, more actionable alerts, we can save lives and prevent tragedies like those we experienced during Winter Storm Elliott.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this commonsense, bipartisan legislation to strengthen our Nation's emergency response systems.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, local weather alerting systems must work properly to save lives. This bill would direct the Government Accountability Office to identify and document any improvements that need to be made to such systems.

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

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to reflect upon Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and Hurricane Sandy in 2012. Both storms resulted in extraordinary death, with, I believe, around 1,700 lives lost in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

This legislation is designed to help prevent those types of deaths and to help communicate the risk to the public, and I strongly urge support for this legislation. It is going to ensure that we have better policies and procedures for alerts during weather-related emergencies.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. GRAVES) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2892, as amended.

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

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to direct the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a study on the effectiveness of emergency alerting systems, and for other purposes."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

FEMA LOAN INTEREST PAYMENT RELIEF ACT

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2672) to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to provide for the authority to reimburse local governments or electric cooperatives for interest expenses, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2672

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 “FEMA Loan Interest Payment Relief Act”.

SEC. 2. REIMBURSEMENT OF INTEREST PAYMENTS RELATED TO PUBLIC ASSISTANCE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Title IV of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“SEC. 431. REIMBURSEMENT OF INTEREST PAYMENTS RELATED TO PUBLIC ASSISTANCE.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—The President, acting through the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, shall provide financial assistance to a local government or electric cooperative as reimbursement for qualifying interest.

“(b) DEFINITIONS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—In this section, the following definitions apply:

“(A) QUALIFYING INTEREST.—The term ‘qualifying interest’ means, with respect to a qualifying loan, the lesser of—

“(i) the actual interest paid to a lender for such qualifying loan; and

“(ii) the interest that would have been paid to a lender if such qualifying loan had an interest rate equal to the prime rate most recently published on the Federal Reserve Statistical Release on selected interest rates.

“(B) QUALIFYING LOAN.—The term ‘qualifying loan’ means a loan—

“(i) obtained by a local government or electric cooperative; and

“(ii) of which not less than 90 percent of the proceeds are used to fund activities for which such local government or electric cooperative receives assistance under this Act after the date on which such loan is disbursed.

“(2) LOCAL GOVERNMENT.—For purposes of this section, the term ‘local government’ includes the District of Columbia.”

(b) RULES OF APPLICABILITY.—

(1) ELIGIBILITY.—Any qualifying interest (as such term is defined in section 431 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as added by this Act) incurred by a local government or electric cooperative in the 7 years preceding the date of enactment of this Act shall be treated as eligible for financial assistance for purposes of such section.

(2) APPROPRIATIONS.—Only amounts appropriated on or after the date of enactment of this Act may be made available to carry out the amendment made by this section.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. GRAVES) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. LARSEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Louisiana.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana. 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. 2672.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2672, the FEMA Loan Interest Payment Relief Act, will help reduce the financial burden on local governments and electric cooperatives that are forced to take out loans to speed up rebuilding of projects eligible for FEMA assistance.

On top of that, the current requirements for when interest can be reimbursed are confusing. The legislation clarifies when FEMA can reimburse the interest that local governments or electric cooperatives incurred on their disaster loans because they were waiting for Federal reimbursement from FEMA.

I thank the gentleman from Florida, Dr. DUNN, for his leadership on this bipartisan legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support of the legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2672, the legislation authored by Representatives Dunn and Soto from Florida. This bill clarifies that FEMA should reimburse local governments and electric co-ops for interest on disaster recovery loans.

In the aftermath of a disaster, local communities are the first to mobilize costly recovery efforts, which they often fund with substantial loans.

It is Congress’ intent that FEMA’s public assistance program eventually reimburses these loans. However, the process can be complex and time-consuming, and the reimbursement policy is often not applied to local governments and electric co-ops in the same way it is applied to States.

When communities are working to recover, the last thing that they need is more uncertainty and additional financial burdens. This legislation provides much-needed relief by directing FEMA to reimburse all qualifying interest expenses equally. By doing so, communities on the front lines of disaster recovery can focus on what truly matters, rebuilding and restoring lives and homes.

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

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DUNN), the author of this legislation.

Mr. DUNN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 2672, the FEMA Loan Interest Payment Relief Act.

This bill would incentivize FEMA to provide timely reimbursement to State and local governments and electrical cooperatives for interest incurred on Stafford Act disaster-related loans.

Last year, we successfully passed this bill in the House by a large margin, but the Senate did not take it up.

Currently, State and local municipal officials take out loans to restore essential services following a natural dis-

aster. However, while they are waiting for the loans to be reimbursed by FEMA, these loans incur interest.

Hurricane Michael devastated my district in 2018, and now, 6 years later, my district is still waiting for FEMA to reimburse these loans. That is costing my 16 counties millions of dollars in interest alone that could have been avoided if FEMA had reimbursed them in a timely fashion.

These are taxpayer dollars that are needlessly tied up by inefficient agency processing and would be better spent within the communities themselves.

In light of back-to-back major hurricanes, Helene and Milton, this year, which brought catastrophic damage and loss of lives to multiple States, I think time is a valuable commodity.

If FEMA has to reimburse the interest that accrues, as well as the principal, they will become more sensitive to the timeliness of reimbursement. I remind my colleagues that the “E” in FEMA stands for “emergency.”

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Mr. Speaker, this bill will not only help my constituents but those in every single State.

State and local leaders constantly complain about the issue of delayed FEMA loan reimbursements. H.R. 2672 will incentivize them to obligate these funds much more expeditiously moving forward.

This, in turn, will ease the burden of accruing interest payments which cost States and local municipalities tens of millions of dollars every year.

Most importantly, H.R. 2672 helps support our communities. Interest paid on these emergency loans is paid by the taxpayers, and the bill ensures that our State and local partners are not stuck footing the bill for FEMA’s delay.

Mr. Speaker, in September, H.R. 2672 passed the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure with unanimous consent. I thank Chairman GRAVES and the full Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and General SCOTT PERRY, chairman of the Emergency Management and Technology Subcommittee, for their consideration and support of this timely and critical legislation. I urge support for this bill.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, local governments and electrical co-ops should not be penalized for taking out loans to jump-start disaster recovery for their communities. This bill will direct the administrator of FEMA to reimburse qualifying interest accrued on such loans.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to make crystal clear what this does.

In the aftermath of a disaster, you will have a local or State government

that will fill out what is called a PW, project worksheet, trying to get reimbursement for something that is allowed under Federal law under the Stafford Act. Current law says the FEMA administrator may reimburse interest costs.

As my good friend from Florida just noted, in some cases there are bureaucrats working through the paperwork for 10 years. In my home State of Louisiana, we have unresolved project worksheets dating back to Hurricane Katrina in 2005. According to my math, that was a long time ago.

Mr. Speaker, we can't cause the burden of this debt to be undertaken by the local governments and by State governments. Rather than making it an option or a discretionary reimbursement, this bill ensures that the interest costs shall be reimbursable. Then local governments can borrow money, and there is more of an incentive for FEMA to actually expedite the approval of these project worksheets.

I think it is a good clarification of law, removing uncertainty for local and State governments and electric co-ops. They will be able to rebuild faster after disaster and reduce the costs associated with delays.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2672, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. GRAVES) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2672, 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.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT COSTS MODERNIZATION ACT

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 7671) to amend section 324 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to incentivize States, Indian Tribes, and Territories to close disaster recovery projects by authorizing the use of excess funds for management costs for other disaster recovery projects.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the joint resolution is as follows:

H.R. 7671

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 Management Costs Modernization Act".

SEC. 2. USE OF EXCESS FUNDS FOR MANAGEMENT COSTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 324 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5165b) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b)(2)—

(A) by redesignating subparagraphs (A) and (B) as clauses (i) and (ii), respectively, and adjusting the margins accordingly; and

(B) in the matter preceding clause (i), as so redesignated, by striking "provide the following percentage rates" and inserting "provide—

"(A) excess funds for management costs as described in subsection (c); and

"(B) the following percentage rates";

(2) by redesignating subsection (c) as subsection (d); and

(3) by inserting after subsection (b) the following:

"(c) USE OF EXCESS FUNDS FOR MANAGEMENT COSTS.—

"(1) DEFINITION.—In this subsection, the term 'excess funds for management costs' means the difference between—

"(A) the amount of the applicable specific management costs authorized under subsection (b)(1) and subsection (b)(2)(B); and

"(B) as of the date on which the grant award is closed, the amount of funding for management costs activities expended by the grantee or subgrantee receiving the financial assistance for costs described in subparagraph (A).

"(2) AVAILABILITY OF EXCESS FUNDS FOR MANAGEMENT COSTS.—The President may make available to a grantee or subgrantee receiving financial assistance under section 403, 404, 406, 407, or 502 any excess funds for management costs.

"(3) USE OF FUNDS.—Excess funds for management costs made available to a grantee or subgrantee under paragraph (2) may be used for—

"(A) activities associated with building capacity to prepare for, recover from, or mitigate the impacts of a major disaster or emergency declared under section 401 or 501, respectively; and

"(B) management costs associated with any—

"(i) major disaster;

"(ii) emergency;

"(iii) disaster preparedness measure; or

"(iv) mitigation activity or measure authorized under section 203, 204, 205, or 404.

"(4) AVAILABILITY.—Excess funds for management costs made available to a grantee or subgrantee under paragraph (2) shall remain available to the grantee or subgrantee until the date that is 5 years after the date on which the excess funds for management costs are made available under paragraph (2)."

(b) APPLICABILITY.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to any grant award in relation to a major disaster or emergency declared under section 401 or 501, respectively, of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170, 5191)—

(1) the declaration of which is made on or after the date of enactment of this Act; and

(2) that is funded with amounts appropriated on or after the date of enactment of this Act.

(c) GAO STUDY.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives a report—

(1) on the actual management costs described in section 324 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5165b) during the period of a major disaster declaration under section 401 of such Act (42 U.S.C. 5170) to determine whether the amount set aside for those management costs after the date of enactment of this Act is appropriate; and

(2) that includes the management costs described in section 324 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5165b) for each disaster declared under during the period of a major disaster declaration under section 401 of such Act (42 U.S.C. 5170) during the 5-year period preceding the date of the report, the amount set aside for those management costs, the use of those management costs, the length of each disaster, and the reason for the length of each disaster.

(d) NO ADDITIONAL FUNDS.—No additional funds are authorized to be appropriated to carry out the amendments made by subsection (a).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. GRAVES) and the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. HOYLE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Louisiana.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material into the RECORD on H.R. 7671.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 7671, the Disaster Management Costs Modernization Act, would provide States flexibility and allow management cost funds to be used across any open disaster, simplifying the administration of these funds for State and emergency managers.

While the Stafford Act currently does make a percentage of disaster dollars available for management costs, each disaster's management costs are tied directly to that declaration, creating accounting challenges.

Mr. Speaker, what often happens is there are multiple disasters occurring in a community at the same time. Trying to separate the administrative costs is difficult, if not impossible.

H.R. 7671 would provide more flexibility and ensure that States can better manage disasters by giving them the flexibility.

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

Ms. HOYLE of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 7671, legislation authored by Representative NEGUSE and cosponsored by Representatives D'ESPOSITO, TITUS, EZELL, and STANTON.

The bill will incentivize faster recovery for federally declared disasters and lower costs. It also enables State and local emergency managers to build capacity for future disaster preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery.

When managing Federal disaster declarations, States administer FEMA grants that may be worth billions of