

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. _____

To establish an interagency task force on expediting disaster relief funding,
and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. BUDD (for himself and Mr. WARNOCK) introduced the following bill;
which was read twice and referred to the Committee on

A BILL

To establish an interagency task force on expediting disaster
relief funding, 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 “Disaster Recovery Im-

5 provement Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS; SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

7 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

8 (1) Numerous programs administered by Fed-

9 eral agencies, while not dedicated exclusively to dis-

1 aster recovery, play a critical role in supporting and
2 expediting recovery efforts.

3 (2) The delayed delivery of Federal disaster re-
4 lief funding to local communities in the wake of re-
5 cent natural disasters, including Hurricane Helene,
6 revealed new and longstanding bottlenecks in Fed-
7 eral disaster response.

8 (3) State and local governments should have
9 greater input in how the Federal Government ad-
10 ministers disaster relief assistance and responsibility
11 for responding to natural disasters.

12 (b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Con-
13 gress that Federal agencies must incorporate rec-
14 ommendations from State and local governments to im-
15 prove their disaster response capability.

16 **SEC. 3. DISASTER RECOVERY IMPROVEMENT TASK FORCE.**

17 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 90 days after
18 the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator of
19 the Federal Emergency Management Agency shall estab-
20 lish an interagency task force on expediting disaster relief
21 funding to be known as the “Disaster Recovery Improve-
22 ment Task Force”.

23 (b) MEMBERSHIP.—

24 (1) IN GENERAL.—The interagency task force
25 established under subsection (a), shall consist of—

1 (A) a senior official from the Federal
2 Emergency Management Agency, appointed by
3 the Administrator of the Federal Emergency
4 Management Agency, to serve as chair;

5 (B) a senior official, appointed by the head
6 of the respective agency of the official, experi-
7 enced in handling disaster recovery matters
8 from each of—

9 (i) the Small Business Administration;

10 (ii) the Department of Housing and
11 Urban Development;

12 (iii) the Department of Agriculture;

13 (iv) the Department of Health and
14 Human Services;

15 (v) the Department of Labor;

16 (vi) the Department of Transpor-
17 tation;

18 (vii) the Department of Commerce;

19 (viii) the Department of the Treasury;

20 (ix) the Department of the Interior;

21 (x) the Environmental Protection
22 Agency;

23 (xi) the Army Corp of Engineers; and

24 (xii) the Office of Management and
25 Budget;

1 (C) 4 state governors, jointly appointed by
2 the Chairs and Ranking Members of the Com-
3 mittee on Homeland Security and Govern-
4 mental Affairs of the Senate and the Committee
5 on Transportation and Infrastructure of the
6 House of Representatives, representing States
7 that, during the 3-year period immediately pre-
8 ceding appointment to the interagency task
9 force, have experienced a major disaster, as de-
10 fined in section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford
11 Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act
12 (42 U.S.C. 5170), of which—

13 (i) 1 was a hurricane;

14 (ii) 1 was a wildfire;

15 (iii) 1 was a tornado; and

16 (iv) 1 was an earthquake; and

17 (D) 4 county commissioners, jointly ap-
18 pointed by the Chairs and Ranking Members of
19 the Committee on Homeland Security and Gov-
20 ernmental Affairs of the Senate and the Com-
21 mittee on Transportation and Infrastructure of
22 the House of Representatives, representing a
23 county in a State that, during the 3-year period
24 immediately preceding appointment to the
25 interagency task force, have experienced a

1 major disaster, as defined in section 401 of the
2 Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emer-
3 gency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170), of
4 which—

- 5 (i) 1 was a hurricane;
- 6 (ii) 1 was a wildfire;
- 7 (iii) 1 was a tornado; and
- 8 (iv) 1 was an earthquake.

9 (2) ADVISORY MEMBERS.—Members of Con-
10 gress representing the Committee on Homeland Se-
11 curity and Governmental Affairs of the Senate and
12 the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
13 of the House of Representatives may serve on the
14 interagency task force established under subsection
15 (a) as advisory members in a non-voting capacity.

16 (c) REPORTS.—

17 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after
18 the date of enactment of this Act, the interagency
19 task force established under subsection (a) shall sub-
20 mit to Committee on Homeland Security and Gov-
21 ernmental Affairs of the Senate, the Committee on
22 Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of
23 Representatives, and the Committee on Homeland
24 Security of the House of Representatives and make
25 publicly available a report that—

1 (A) identifies the programs, including tem-
2 porary programs, for which Congress appro-
3 priates funds to aid recovery purposes relating
4 to the consequences of natural disasters;

5 (B) contains recommendations for Federal
6 agencies on the most effective way to expedite
7 disaster relief efforts, including recommenda-
8 tions to—

9 (i) streamline the establishment and
10 administration of temporary programs;

11 (ii) improve the timeliness, accessi-
12 bility, and clarity of applications for fund-
13 ing; and

14 (iii) reduce delays in the review and
15 obligation of funds with respect to applica-
16 tions received;

17 (C) identifies the different types of funding
18 mechanisms for which Congress provides appro-
19 priations to Federal agencies for disaster relief,
20 including grants, loans, reimbursements, and
21 contract authority;

22 (D) contains recommendations to Federal
23 agencies and Congress on the most effective
24 way to expedite the expenditure of the funds

1 identified under subparagraph (C) toward dis-
2 aster relief;

3 (E) contains recommendations for Federal
4 agencies and Congress to strengthen State ca-
5 pacity to prepare for, respond to, and recover
6 from natural disasters;

7 (F) identifies factors that cause delays in
8 disaster relief program funding being made
9 available or obligated, including during transi-
10 tions from one presidential administration to
11 another presidential administration;

12 (G) includes recommendations on how out-
13 going and incoming Presidential administra-
14 tions can equip themselves to set up and deliver
15 disaster relief aid without delay, including an
16 assessment of actions required of both outgoing
17 and incoming Presidential administrations to
18 ensure continuity and uninterrupted delivery of
19 disaster relief funding;

20 (H) evaluates barriers within Federal
21 agencies and across Federal agencies that delay
22 the obligation or expenditure of disaster relief
23 funds and provides recommendations to address
24 those barriers; and

1 (I) assesses specific actions taken by Fed-
2 eral agencies over time that have improved or
3 hindered interagency coordination, State and
4 local engagement, and the timely delivery of
5 disaster relief funding.

6 (2) RECOMMENDATIONS.—In making rec-
7 ommendations for the report under paragraph (1),
8 the interagency task force shall make recommenda-
9 tions for ways to expedite making available and obli-
10 gating specific funding appropriated by Congress to
11 certain agencies, including—

12 (A) to the Federal Emergency Manage-
13 ment Agency, including with respect to Public
14 Assistance funding under section 406 of the
15 Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emer-
16 gency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5172)) and
17 Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funding
18 under section 404 of that Act (42 U.S.C.
19 5170);

20 (B) to the Department of Housing and
21 Urban Development, including with respect to
22 funding under the Community Development
23 Block Grant Disaster Recovery program;

24 (C) to the Department of Agriculture, in-
25 cluding with respect to funding for necessary

1 expenses relating to losses of revenue or quality
2 or production of crops as a consequence of a
3 major disaster, as defined in section 404 of the
4 Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emer-
5 gency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170);

6 (D) to the Department of Agriculture, in-
7 cluding with respect to Forest Service oper-
8 ations, forest and rangeland research, state,
9 private, and tribal forestry, and National Forest
10 System funding for necessary expenses relating
11 to the consequences of disaster relief;

12 (E) to the Department of Labor, including
13 with respect to Disaster Recovery Dislocated
14 Worker Grant funding under section 170 of the
15 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29
16 U.S.C. 3225);

17 (F) to the Department of Commerce, in-
18 cluding with respect to Economic Development
19 Administration funding under the Public Works
20 and Economic Development Act of 1965 (42
21 U.S.C. 3121 et seq.);

22 (G) to the Department of the Interior, in-
23 cluding with respect to National Park Service
24 Historic Preservation Fund and construction

1 funding for necessary expenses relating to the
2 consequences of disaster relief; and

3 (H) to the Environmental Protection Agen-
4 cy, including with respect to Clean Water State
5 Revolving Fund funding under title VI of the
6 Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C.
7 1381 et seq.).

8 (3) IMPLEMENTATION REPORT.—Not later than
9 180 days after the date on which the interagency
10 task force submits the report under paragraph (1),
11 the interagency task force shall submit to the con-
12 gressional committees described in that paragraph a
13 report detailing—

14 (A) which of the recommendations con-
15 tained in the report under paragraph (1) shall
16 be implemented by Federal agencies and why
17 those recommendations in the report not being
18 implemented are not selected for implementa-
19 tion;

20 (B) how the recommendations selected for
21 implementation will be carried out; and

22 (C) legislative recommendations for Con-
23 gress to support the recommendations selected
24 for implementation.

1 (d) NO ADDITIONAL FUNDING.—No additional funds
2 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act.

3 (e) TERMINATION.—The interagency task force es-
4 tablished under subsection (a) shall terminate on the date
5 that is 90 days after the date on which the interagency
6 task force submits the report under subsection (c)(3).