

Press Releases

Graves, Larsen Release Draft Bill to Dramatically Reform FEMA

Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Sam Graves (R-MO) and Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Ranking Member Rick Larsen (D-WA) today released draft legislation that would provide the most robust legislative reform of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and federal disaster assistance programs in decades.

Graves and Larsen released a “discussion draft” of the *Fixing Emergency Management for Americans (FEMA) Act of 2025* to solicit feedback from Members of Congress, emergency management stakeholders, and others. The draft bill streamlines the federal government’s disaster response and recovery programs while also making FEMA a cabinet-level agency once again and directly accountable to the President. The bill also rewards effective state and local preparedness, protects taxpayers, cuts red tape, and ensures that relief efforts are fast, fair, and free from political bias.

“We have clearly seen that FEMA is not working as it should for Americans who’ve been impacted by disasters. Congress has passed FEMA reforms over the years, but it simply hasn’t been enough,” said Chairman Graves. “By releasing this discussion draft legislation, we hope to engage our colleagues and stakeholders on comprehensive FEMA reform. This draft bill includes substantive changes that will transform FEMA and our emergency programs to be much more state and locally driven – not micro-managed into ineffectiveness by the federal government. It makes commonsense reforms to help victims and communities recover faster and to ensure better coordination among agencies involved in emergency preparedness, response, and recovery. The bill also strips out the red tape that slows down recoveries, it makes disaster programs more accountable to the taxpayer, and it ensures that FEMA treats all victims fairly.

Graves continued, “To achieve the goals of this bill, we propose streamlining FEMA, returning the agency to the Cabinet level, and making the Administrator reportable directly to the President. We look forward to working with our colleagues and stakeholders to move a bill that provides the most significant and meaningful FEMA reforms since Hurricane Katrina.”

“FEMA is the last line of defense for families impacted by increasingly frequent and severe natural disasters,” Ranking Member Larsen said. “Republican and Democrats on this Committee agree that it is an important agency in need of reform. That’s why I’m proud to partner with my counterpart, Sam Graves, to release draft legislation giving FEMA the tools it needs to simplify its programs and provide quicker relief to disaster-impacted communities. I look forward to working with my colleagues to refine this bill with stakeholder input and pass it into law.”

[Read the discussion draft bill text.](#)

Summary of the FEMA Act of 2025

The *FEMA Act of 2025* restores FEMA’s original status as an independent agency, reporting directly to the President and overseen by its own Inspector General.

- This structure mirrors the *Stafford Act*, which authorizes the President to direct federal disaster response efforts through the Disaster Relief Fund.
- Returning FEMA to a Cabinet-level agency will empower the FEMA Administrator to lead a coordinated, government-wide response to disasters.
- FEMA will become more agile and focused on helping Americans – not bogged down by having its resources and personnel diverted to support non-*Stafford Act* disasters.

The *FEMA Act of 2025* puts disaster-impacted states in the driver's seat, helps dollars reach communities faster, injects common sense, and cuts red tape that drags out disaster recovery for decades.

- By replacing the slow and bureaucratic rebuilding process with faster, project-based grants, states will be able to set the pace of recovery, reduce their dependence on costly consultants, and prioritize the highest-need projects – without having to take out expensive loans or wait years for reimbursement.
- For the first time, states are incentivized to make their own investments in mitigation, robust state rainy day funds, and private insurance policies.
- The discussion draft makes critical permitting reforms to speed up rebuilding projects and eliminate unnecessary delays.
- The *FEMA Act of 2025* establishes a Recovery Task Force charged with closing out more than 1,000 lingering disaster declarations dating back to Hurricane Katrina and directs FEMA to improve coordination across all federal agencies involved in disaster recovery.

The *FEMA Act of 2025* makes commonsense changes to help disaster aid work better for survivors – while saving taxpayer dollars.

- Disaster survivors will complete a single, streamlined application when applying for assistance, significantly reducing the paperwork burden.
- FEMA must provide clear, understandable notices to disaster survivors – ending the confusion caused by complex and jargon-filled denial letters.
- The discussion draft directs the FEMA Administrator to apply practical, survivor-focused solutions that both speed assistance and reduce overall costs to taxpayers.
- It removes disincentives that have discouraged donations from charities, religious organizations, and the public, ensuring more non-federal support for disaster survivors.
- States are given more flexibility to determine the best emergency housing solution for a particular disaster.

The *FEMA Act of 2025* strengthens efforts to protect communities before a disaster occurs.

- States can receive preapproval for mitigation projects through a peer-review process to speed up funding when disaster strikes.
- The discussion draft clarifies building code requirements, ensuring states retain the flexibility to tailor standards to the hazards they face.
- It supports homeowners as they invest in cost-effective mitigation improvements, reducing long-term disaster costs.

The *FEMA Act of 2025* ends the politicization of disaster aid and demands greater transparency and accountability from FEMA.

- The discussion draft strictly prohibits any political discrimination in providing disaster recovery assistance.
- It directs the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to establish a centralized public website that tracks disaster assistance funding across the federal government.
- It mandates a full Government Accountability Office (GAO) review of all FEMA regulations and policies to eliminate outdated, conflicting, and unnecessary rules.
- It requires an assessment of identity theft and disaster fraud risks, and directs reviews related to insurance coverage, the effectiveness of public alerting systems, and cost savings associated with the reforms in the discussion draft.