

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4243

To improve Federal disaster relief and emergency assistance, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DECEMBER 11, 2015

Mr. KILMER (for himself, Mr. NEWHOUSE, and Mr. REICHERT) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

A BILL

To improve Federal disaster relief and emergency assistance, 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 “Individual Assistance
5 Improvement Act of 2015”.

6 **SEC. 2. IMPROVEMENTS TO FEDERAL DISASTER RELIEF**
7 **AND EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE.**

8 (a) REPORT ON SMALL STATE AND RURAL AREA AS-
9 SISTANCE.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the
10 enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Ad-

1 administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agen-
2 cy shall submit to Congress a report with recommenda-
3 tions for improving Federal assistance, with respect to
4 small States and rural areas, under the Robert T. Stafford
5 Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C.
6 5121 et seq.). The report shall include an identification
7 of additional resources required for recommended im-
8 provements.

9 (b) FACTORS FOR INDIVIDUAL ASSISTANCE PRO-
10 GRAM.—In measuring the severity, magnitude, and impact
11 of a disaster and evaluating the need for assistance to in-
12 dividuals under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and
13 Emergency Assistance Act, the Administrator shall not
14 apply, with respect to a rural area, the factor set out in
15 section 206.48(b)(1) of title 44, Code of Federal Regula-
16 tions (relating to the concentration of damages).

17 (c) RELEASE OF DOCUMENTATION RELATED TO DIS-
18 ASTER DECLARATION DECISIONS.—Not later than 25
19 days after a Governor, or Chief Executive of an Indian
20 tribal government, requests documentation related to a
21 major disaster declaration decision under section 401 of
22 the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency As-
23 sistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170), the Administrator shall
24 provide the Governor, or Chief Executive, with all such
25 documentation, including—

1 (1) an analysis of the factors that the Federal
2 Emergency Management Agency considered in mak-
3 ing the decision, including any threshold, limit, or
4 average that the Agency applied; and

5 (2) a rationale explaining the decision.

6 (d) STUDY ON DAMAGE ASSESSMENT.—

7 (1) STUDY.—The Comptroller General of the
8 United States shall conduct a comprehensive review
9 of—

10 (A) the damage assessment processes of
11 the Agency with respect to major disaster dec-
12 larations; and

13 (B) the teams that carry out such proc-
14 esses.

15 (2) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after
16 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comp-
17 troller General shall submit to Congress a report on
18 the results of the review conducted under paragraph
19 (1), including recommendations for improving such
20 processes.

21 (e) BIENNIAL STUDY OF AVERAGE AMOUNT OF INDI-
22 VIDUAL ASSISTANCE.—

23 (1) STUDY.—Not later than the end of the first
24 quarter of the first full fiscal year beginning after
25 the date of the enactment of this Act, and biennially

1 thereafter, the Administrator shall conduct a
2 study—

3 (A) to compare—

4 (i) the average amount of individual
5 assistance provided per person for each
6 major disaster declared during the 5 most
7 recently completed fiscal years;

8 (ii) the average damages realized per
9 individual for each such disaster; and

10 (iii) for each event where a request for
11 a major disaster declaration was denied
12 during the 5 most recently completed fiscal
13 years, the average damages realized per in-
14 dividual for each such event; and

15 (B) to collect the data needed to update
16 the table included after section 206.48(b)(6) of
17 title 44, Code of Federal Regulations (relating
18 to the average amount of individual assistance
19 by State).

20 (2) REPORT AND UPDATE.—Not later than 180
21 days after the completion of each study under para-
22 graph (1), the Administrator shall submit to Con-
23 gress a report on the results of the study and update
24 the table described in paragraph (1)(B).

1 (f) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act, the following defini-
2 tions shall apply:

3 (1) GOVERNOR.—The term “Governor” has the
4 meaning given such term in section 102 of the Rob-
5 ert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency As-
6 sistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5122).

7 (2) RURAL.—The term “rural” means an area
8 that is located—

9 (A) outside a metropolitan statistical area,
10 as defined by the Office of Management and
11 Budget; or

12 (B) in a census tract in a metropolitan sta-
13 tistical area with a Department of Agriculture
14 rural-urban commuting area code of 4 or high-
15 er.

16 (3) SMALL STATE.—The term “small State”
17 has the same meaning as such term is used in the
18 table included after section 206.48(b)(6) of title 44,
19 Code of Federal Regulations.

○