

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 7241

To amend the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act to establish an emergency preparedness and response technical assistance program to assist entities that operate rural water or wastewater systems in preparing for and responding to natural or man-made disasters.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 5, 2024

Mr. STAUBER (for himself, Mr. FINSTAD, and Mrs. FISCHBACH) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture

A BILL

To amend the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act to establish an emergency preparedness and response technical assistance program to assist entities that operate rural water or wastewater systems in preparing for and responding to natural or man-made disasters.

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 “Rural Water System
5 Disaster Preparedness and Assistance Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE**
2 **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.**

3 Section 306(a) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural
4 Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1926(a)) is amended by add-
5 ing at the end the following:

6 “(27) EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RE-
7 SPONSE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.—

8 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall
9 establish an emergency preparedness and re-
10 sponse technical assistance program to provide
11 grants to eligible entities to assist associations
12 described in paragraph (1) that operate rural
13 water or wastewater systems in preparing for
14 and responding to natural or man-made disas-
15 ters, as determined by the Secretary.

16 “(B) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—An entity eligi-
17 ble to receive a grant under subparagraph (A)
18 is a nonprofit organization that—

19 “(i) has demonstrated experience pro-
20 viding emergency technical assistance for
21 disaster preparation, recovery, and re-
22 sponse activities to water and wastewater
23 utilities nationwide; and

24 “(ii) has the capacity to deploy per-
25 sonnel that possess—

1 “(I) an active water or waste-
2 water system operators’ license; or

3 “(II) knowledge of water and
4 wastewater utilities necessary to carry
5 out activities described in subpara-
6 graph (C).

7 “(C) ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES.—An eligible
8 entity that receives a grant under subparagraph
9 (A) shall use the grant—

10 “(i) to provide on-site personnel and
11 equipment to assist with water and waste-
12 water systems in the event of a disaster;

13 “(ii) to coordinate with statewide
14 emergency response networks to assist with
15 water and wastewater systems;

16 “(iii) to facilitate the development of
17 disaster action plans between associations
18 described in subparagraph (A), units of
19 local government, the Federal Emergency
20 Management Agency, and State emergency
21 management agencies;

22 “(iv) to improve resiliency and mitiga-
23 tion planning with respect to water or
24 wastewater systems;

1 “(v) to provide geographic information
2 system mapping of water and wastewater
3 systems;

4 “(vi) to prepare or update predisaster
5 vulnerability assessments, emergency re-
6 sponse plans, communication protocols, or
7 hazard recognition and evaluation skills
8 with respect to water and wastewater sys-
9 tems;

10 “(vii) to conduct preliminary damage
11 assessments of critical infrastructure in the
12 event of a disaster;

13 “(viii) to provide emergency services
14 with respect to water and wastewater sys-
15 tems to restore service in the event of a
16 disaster, including—

17 “(I) pump and motor evaluation
18 and repair;

19 “(II) water disinfection and
20 flushing;

21 “(III) leak detection;

22 “(IV) line repair;

23 “(V) water main and valve loca-
24 tion;

1 “(VI) emergency power genera-
2 tion;

3 “(VII) bypass pumping;

4 “(VIII) water treatment; and

5 “(IX) maintaining safety meas-
6 ures;

7 “(ix) to address outstanding defi-
8 ciencies focused on resolving health-based
9 regulatory, operational, financial, and man-
10 agerial deficiencies that impact the sus-
11 tainability of water and wastewater sys-
12 tems;

13 “(x) to assist with application and re-
14 porting requirements for Federal and State
15 agencies, including the Federal Emergency
16 Management Agency and insurance recov-
17 ery claims, with respect to water and
18 wastewater systems; and

19 “(xi) to provide for disaster prepara-
20 tion, support, and response activities tar-
21 geted to disadvantaged communities that
22 lack the financial resources and human
23 capital necessary to adequately address
24 significant health, safety, or sanitary con-

1 cerns with respect to the water and waste-
2 water systems of those communities.

3 “(D) USE OF FUNDS.—

4 “(i) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity
5 that receives a grant under subparagraph
6 (A) may use the grant for salaries, sup-
7 plies, and expenses relating to the activities
8 described in subparagraph (C).

9 “(ii) LIMITATION.—Not more than 25
10 percent of the amount of a grant under
11 subparagraph (A) may be used to purchase
12 or reimburse the rental costs of appro-
13 priate emergency equipment, as determined
14 by the Secretary.

15 “(E) RESTRICTION.—An eligible entity
16 that receives a grant under subparagraph (A)
17 may not use the grant funds to pay for eligible
18 activities for which the eligible entity receives
19 other Federal funds.

20 “(F) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIA-
21 TIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated
22 to carry out this paragraph \$20,000,000 for
23 each of fiscal years 2024 through 2028.”.

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