

The STRONG Act: Strengthening The Resiliency of Our Nation on the Ground

Section By Section

Extreme weather is and will continue to be a major challenge for our nation. This legislation provides state and local planners with the tools and information they need to develop and improve local extreme weather resiliency efforts and plans. By building stronger communities, we can reduce the serious economic and human costs of extreme weather over the short and long term.

Sections 1 and 2 – Title and Findings and Purpose: Extreme weather events have battered the nation, resulting in record-high losses for 2011 and more broken records in 2012, most recently with Superstorm Sandy. This bill will use existing federal resources to help decrease future losses of life, property, well-being, and economic growth due to extreme weather by directing the Federal Government to better: coordinate its efforts and resources to support State, local, and private and public sector resiliency efforts; support planning and decision-making at the State and local level through usable tools and information; communicate the latest extreme weather information clearly and effectively; and establish a unified, strategic vision for an extreme weather resilient nation.

Section 3 - Definitions: This section defines extreme weather events and resilience.

Section 4 - Gap and Overlap Analysis: The Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) will chair an interagency working group composed of Cabinet-level participants, which will conduct a gap and overlap analysis of Federal agencies' current and planned activities on short- and long-term extreme weather resilience in key sectors: agriculture; forestry and natural resources management; water management; energy supply and transmission; infrastructure, including transportation, water and wastewater and coastal infrastructure; public health and healthcare infrastructure; communications; housing and other buildings, national security; insurance; and emergency preparedness. A federal advisory workgroup composed of private and public representatives will play a key consultative role throughout the process, as will an advisory group composed solely of State, local, and tribal representatives.

Section 5 - Extreme Weather Resiliency Action Plan: Based on the gap and overlap analysis, the interagency working group will develop and implement an extreme weather resiliency action plan to support State, local, and private and public sector resiliency efforts and communicate the latest extreme weather information clearly and effectively, including through an information clearinghouse. Notably, the plan will not create any new State responsibilities or requirements; instead it will focus on giving state, local, and private sector decision makers the information and tools necessary to develop greater resiliency based on their own needs. This section also directs the working group to identify existing funds and programs that can support State, local, and tribal resiliency planning and projects and encourages leveraging of private funds. It also includes a timeline for plan development and implementation and encourages innovative financing options, like public-private partnerships.

Section 6 - Authorization: This section authorizes federal agencies and OSTP to carry out this Act.

Section 7 - Reports: This section describes the timeline for OSTP to report to Congress on the plan and requires the submission of triennial updates to Congress. It also directs the Government Accountability Office to report on existing government programs and policies related to disaster relief that impede improving short and long-term extreme weather resilience. Additionally, FEMA is to provide an annual report on funding disbursed for resiliency and funding requests going forward.

Section 8 - Appropriations: This section authorizes sums as necessary to develop and implement the plan, including the creation of the public clearinghouse.