



October 16, 2020



## THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON:

### Two Steps Forward, One Step Back

Much of the oxygen in Washington this week was consumed by confirmation hearings for Judge Amy Coney Barrett as a new Supreme Court Associate Justice. Even so, the landscape for another coronavirus stimulus deal continued to shift, the President announced this week that he'd authorized Treasury Secretary Mnuchin to negotiate a deal above the previous offer of \$1.8 trillion. In further talks this week, Secretary Mnuchin and House Speaker Pelosi did come to a fundamental agreement to language around a national testing strategy, an agreement which thus far had remained elusive. This change would allow states to forego the Administration's requirement that states enter contracts and pass legislation to qualify for federal aid.

However, opportunities for further progress are cloudy. The President has continued to reject Democrats' previously offered \$2.2 trillion package on the basis that it would, "bail out badly run Democrat states and cities." ([Roll Call](#)) Additionally, Senate Majority Leader McConnell said this week that Senate Republicans still prefer a "highly targeted" bill totaling \$500 billion. Secretary Mnuchin also said this week that he does not consider it likely that additional legislation will pass before the election.

Today also marks one year since Speaker Pelosi and President Trump have spoken directly to one another, a marker that underscores how fraught the relationship has become in recent years. They continue to conduct business primarily through intermediaries including Secretary Mnuchin and others.

More News from the Nation's Capital...

#### **Webinar on Developing Highly Competitive FEMA BRIC Applications**

The BuildStrong Coalition is hosting a webinar on Thursday, October 22 at 2:00pm ET focused on the two specific criteria key to developing highly competitive applications for the new FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program – mandatory adoption of building codes and Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule (BCEGS) Rating of 1 to 5.

The discussion will include:

- BCEGS and how BCEGS scores interrelate to the adoption and enforcement of strong codes.

- The key elements of a community with a BCEGS score between 1-5. How to position your community to succeed with BRIC applications by leveraging the BCEGS and Model Building Codes criteria.
- Capitalizing on key community partners to help drive resilience, particularly for residential structures.
- The benefits of achieving resilience for the entire community.

Speakers for the session include:

- Dale Thomure, Hazard Mitigation Manager, ISO
- Leslie Chapman-Henderson, President and CEO, FLASH
- Additional mitigation and resilience industry leaders to be announced

To attend the webinar, RSVP to [info@buildstrongamerica.com](mailto:info@buildstrongamerica.com). The virtual event is free to attend upon registration. All registered attendees will be provided a virtual meeting link in advance of the event. Registration is limited, but the full webinar will be available on BuildStrong's website following the event.

### **GAO Finds COVID-19 Pandemic Intensifies Disaster Recovery Challenges for K-12 Schools**

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) reviewed how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected schools recovering from recent natural disasters and the support the Department of Education has provided to help school recover from recent natural disasters, as well as how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected schools' use of these resources. GAO found that the pandemic exacerbated mental health issues and contributed to lost instructional time, staff burnout, delays in recovery projects, and financial strain in their communities. Additionally, when taken in context of previous disasters in local areas, the services needed to treat trauma and other disaster-related mental health issues were not readily available, and some local officials noted that providing mental health services has been especially difficult during the pandemic.

Between 2017 and 2019 Education provided \$1.4 billion to assist schools in over 30 states and U.S. territories with recovery from presidentially-declared major disasters. Local officials are using or planning to use Education disaster grants to provide mental health services to students and cover other costs associated with re-opening post-disaster, such as additional transportation services, but that during the pandemic this was sometimes challenging. Specifically, officials said that timeframes for using grant funds were too short for long-term recovery needs such as mental health services, particularly with the compounding effects of the pandemic.

[View the report here.](#)

Other News from DC and Around the Country:

The Hill: [Bipartisan Governors Ask Trump for Help with COVID Vaccine Distribution Plan](#)

NIH Director's Blog: [Building Resilience During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

GCN: [Bmore Responsive: Home-grown Emergency Response Coordination](#)

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