



February 5, 2021



THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON:

Groundhog Day

Groundhog Day feels like an apt descriptor more often than not when tracking developments in Washington. Time and again, the same issues have been contentious when discussing the possibility of coronavirus relief packages, much as the same issues come up every year around homeland security funding or the need for a continuing resolution.

All that is to say you can expect to hear about budget reconciliation regularly over the next few weeks. This week was full of reconciliation developments as the Senate approved a budget resolution to allow for the passage of a coronavirus relief bill without widespread bipartisan support. The House originally passed one version Wednesday but following the Senate's Thursday overnight vote-a-rama session that added a series of amendments the House is re-voting on the adjusted language this afternoon. Language edits included a lower income limit on eligibility for stimulus checks and blocking out the inclusion of a \$15 minimum wage. Notably, an amendment was attached related to a public awareness campaign for vaccine distribution. It is expected that the House will approve the changes.

With this initial procedural hurdle (almost) down, Congressional Democrats are looking to formalize and pass a coronavirus relief package by mid-March. The proposed legislation currently includes \$350 billion for state and local governments and more than \$30 billion for the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF).

Senators' attentions may shift temporarily as the coming weeks are expected to be jam-packed with the pending impeachment trial as well as the confirmation hearings and votes for the new administration's appointments.

There were developments aplenty on the interagency side of Washington this week as well, with the Pentagon authorizing more than 1,000 active duty service members to support FEMA's vaccination efforts. This surge support is currently expected to be split among five state vaccination sites, although the number of troops and supported sites could grow in the coming weeks.

The White House released [this memo](#) providing more information on the FEMA 100 percent federal cost share for FEMA Public Assistance Category B expenditures. The 100 percent coverage is retroactive for expenditures that were eligible at that time. Here is the [initial memo](#) allowing for the cost share change effective until September 30, 2021.

DHS announced its commitment to equal access to COVID-19 vaccines and distribution sites for undocumented immigrants as they are individually eligible according to local distribution guidelines. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) will not carry out enforcement operations at or near healthcare facilities except under extraordinary circumstances.

This week FEMA announced a month-long extension to the comment period for the proposed changes to the Public Assistance declaration factors to March 12. NEMA's deadline for state comments has also been extended to March 5 to submit comments that reflect the states' needs writ large. For ease of access, the Federal Register notice is [available here](#).

Hearings the Week of February 8, 2021

[Nomination of Neera Tanden to be Director, Office of Management and Budget](#)

Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs

Tuesday, February 9, 9:15am ET

[Homeland Cybersecurity: Assessing Cyber Threats and Building Resilience](#)

House Committee on Homeland Security

Wednesday, February 10, 2:00pm ET

More News from the Nation's Capital...

National Homeland Security Consortium Meets Virtually on After Action Report Development

The Consortium (composed of 22 public safety organizations and associations and co-chaired by NEMA) is partnering with CNA to develop an after action report on the initial months of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of this process, the Consortium held meetings this week focused on issues and challenges related to the following topic areas submitted by participant organizations:

- Adherence to protective measures;
- Emergency powers and authorities;
- Inadequate, confusing, and changing guidance;
- Information sharing and public messaging;
- Logistics and supply chain management;
- Operational coordination;
- Revenue shortfalls; and
- Workforce resilience.

The group discussed these challenges and potential recommendations for improvement, as well as some developing best practices moving forward for pandemic response. The report will be available in the coming weeks.

Members of the NEMA Homeland Security Committee are eligible to participate in the Consortium.

GAO Releases Recommendations to Streamline Hazard Mitigation Grants and Assess Program Effects

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) released the report, *Disaster Resilience: FEMA Should Take Additional Steps to Streamline Hazard Mitigation Grants and Assess Program Effects*.

In the report, GAO finds that FEMA obligated more than \$11 billion through four grant programs that fund state and local hazard mitigation efforts for FY2010-2018. About 88 percent of this was awarded through two programs that award grants post-disaster. State and local officials reported that the grant application process is lengthy and complex. FEMA noted its intent to review the process but has no recorded plans to do so.

GAO recommends that the FEMA Administrator should establish a plan with timeframes to develop pre-calculated benefits for additional project types; establish a plan with timeframes to assess PA, HMGP, FMA, and BRIC hazard mitigation grant processes to identify and implement steps to reduce the complexity of applications; create a centralized inventory of hazard mitigation resources on the agency website; develop a plan for conducting future loss avoidance studies to include more hazard types; consider opportunities to adopt common methods and metrics across hazard mitigation programs; and publicly share pre-calculated benefits studies and state developed records of effectiveness.

[Read the report here.](#)

Legal Aid Disaster Resources Center Website Launched

The Legal Aid Disaster Resources Center ([ladrc.org](#)), a website helping legal aid and other service organizations more effectively meet the civil legal needs of disaster survivors was launched by the Legal Services Corporation (LSC).

LSC's Disaster Task Force previously published a [report](#) on how to best ensure low-income disaster survivors receive necessary legal assistance, which included a recommendation to create this website. The website's goal is to provide trainings and resources for pro bono and legal aid attorneys and their communities. It also includes a bank of experienced disaster legal aid attorneys and emergency management professionals.

[See the website here.](#)

Other News from DC and Around the Country:

Domestic Preparedness: [Moving on from 2020 – A Future for Emergency Management](#)
Peterson Institute for International Economics: [Why Some Experts Got Pandemic Readiness Wrong](#)
Governing: [Increasing Numbers of U.S. Residents in High-Risk Wildfire and Flood Zones](#)

[nemaweb.org](#)



Copyright NEMA 2020. All rights reserved.