



You are receiving this information as a member of the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA). It is being sent to you as a benefit of membership.

JULY 28, 2023



## THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON: “That’s All, Folks!”

There’s a common misperception that the venerable August Recess of Congress is due to heat. This isn’t entirely true as most Congressional buildings had air conditioning in the 1920’s, at least a full decade before most of the rest of the country. It actually has more to do with the 20th Amendment to the Constitution, which moved the beginning of presidential and Congressional terms from March to January.

In 1933, when the amendment was adopted, being in Congress was seen more as a part-time job. With the federal fiscal year ending on June 30 back then also, Congress would wrap-up their January-to-early summer responsibilities and head home. Even Vice President John Nance Garner once famously said, “No good legislation ever comes out of Washington after June.”

By the time the 60’s rolled around, the summer recess was instituted as a way of breaking-up the notion of Congress being in town full time, all the time. It gave the nation a break, but also gave Members the opportunity to go home and be with family. But this ultimate solution was not the result of cooler heads in Congressional leadership. Rather, it was a petition by the Democratic and Republic Congressional Wives Forums and testimony before the Senate Rules Committee that ultimately codified the practice in the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970.

While Congress heads-off for their statutorily required Recess, we saw some promising last-minute activity on issues such as wildfire policy, developing a universal application, maintaining AM broadcast radio in all vehicles, and Appropriations from the Senate. The three former issues are highlighted below, and the latter may take until early next week, but be on the lookout.

### CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS NEXT WEEK

*Congressmembers are on recess and in their districts for the month of August. Watch this space in late August as legislative hearings are scheduled for the month of September.*

### MORE NEWS FROM THE NATION’S CAPITAL

#### UNIVERSAL APPLICATION BILL CLEARS MAJOR HURDLE

Late last night, S. 1528, the [Disaster Assistance Simplification Act](#) passed the Senate. The bill, with NEMA and IAEM support, requires FEMA to establish a universal disaster application for disaster survivors. It would bring together many (but not all) programs from agencies such as the Small Business Administration (SBA), Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The bill allows FEMA to share information on disaster survivors with other federal agencies to simplify recovery efforts and reduce the burden on survivors after a disaster. FEMA would be the lead in implementing a universal disaster application for disaster victims so that they would no longer be required to submit multiple applications, which often times ask duplicative questions, to each federal entity for assistance. All information sharing practices would have to meet applicable data security standards and best practices.

#### SENATE MOVES BILL TO KEEP AM RADIO IN VEHICLES

Yesterday, the Senate passed the [AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act](#) to require automakers to maintain AM broadcast radio in vehicles. The bill was backed by associations including NEMA, IAEM, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the American Public Works Association, and the National Association of Broadcasters as well as every former FEMA Administrator and 27 bipartisan co-sponsors in Congress.

The bill:

- Directs the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to issue a rule that requires automakers to maintain AM broadcast radio in their vehicles without a separate or additional payment, fee, or surcharge beyond the base price of the device;
- Requires any automaker that sells vehicles without access to AM broadcast radio before the effective date of the NHTSA regulation to clearly disclose to consumers that the vehicle lacks access to AM broadcast radio; and
- Directs the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to study the reach and effectiveness of AM broadcast radio for alerting the public to emergencies relative to other technologies.

#### NEMA MAKES PROGRESS ON WILDFIRE RECOMMENDATIONS

The past month has been a busy one in the D.C. trying to secure co-sponsorship and partner sign-on to a bill codifying some of the recommendations included in NEMA’s wildfire position paper of 2022. The draft legislation will require FEMA to update FMAG and PAPPG guidance and the benefit cost analysis process to reflect the unique needs of wildfires. As the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee continues their review, small changes continue to be made as the bill evolves. There is hope the bill will see action shortly after the August Recess and can receive a mark-up slot sometime early in the fall. In the meantime, NEMA is working with IAEM, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, and BuildStrong Coalition to maintain a coalition of support. The latter recently [published an op-ed](#) in Homeland Security Today.

#### NEMA LEADERSHIP ADDRESSES STATE AND LOCAL RESILIENCE ISSUES

On Tuesday, NEMA Vice President and Maryland Secretary of Emergency Management Russ Strickland attended a lead-in session of the 12th Annual Building Resilience Conference co-hosted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and U.S. Chamber Foundation. Strickland participated in a roundtable with local representatives discussing a range of issues including:

- Providing more tools, more funding, and especially more technical assistance for disadvantaged communities to access existing opportunities. FEMA’s competitive process is often a challenge for many communities.
- Promoting more collaboration and coordination across federal agencies to leverage actions and resources.
- Exploring and offering advantages for regional and multiple use benefit projects.
- Streamlining application processes and ensuring consistent and understandable cost-benefit analysis.

Other panels during the event include presentations by the White House and FEMA on overall federal resilience efforts as well as individual programs such as BRIC, hazard mitigation, STORM, and Severe Repetitive Loss. More information on the larger conference may be found [here](#).

### OTHER NEWS FROM D.C. AND AROUND THE COUNTRY

Associated Press: [Biden looks to provide relief from extreme heat as record high temperatures persist across the US](#)

U.S. GAO: [Transit security: FEMA should improve transparency of grant decisions](#)

Vermont WCAX: [Previously-flooded homeowners discover FEMA insurance loophole can be disqualifying](#)

New York Times: [Blistering heat spreads to U.S. Midwest as wildfire smoke lingers](#)

GovExec: [Flood management gets a boost from drones](#)

GovExec: [Public sector slow to respond to cyberattacks, report finds](#)

[nemaweb.org](https://nemaweb.org)



Facebook



Twitter



LinkedIn



Youtube

Copyright NEMA 2023. All rights reserved.