



## SUMMARY

In the period since the October Annual Forum, the big focus in Washington has been the Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) budget process. After an initial Continuing Resolution (CR) that funded the government into December 2024, and a second CR that extended funding into March 2025, a long-term funding solution remains elusive. As of the time of this update, only days remain before the current CR expires, making a government shutdown a likely scenario.

After a disappointing end to the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, which saw one of NEMA’s key legislative priorities—the *Disaster Management Costs Modernization Act*—very nearly become law, we’re hopeful that we can finally get this one over the “finish line” in the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress. We’ve already made significant progress on this effort, with the bill passing House committee and being reintroduced in the Senate in recent weeks.

The other significant development was the establishment of the FEMA Review Council through a Trump Administration Executive Order. NEMA will be positioned to serve as a resource to the FEMA Review Council to achieve outcomes that benefit all levels of emergency management. We look forward to working with the FEMA Review Council through all possible avenues to develop positive solutions, make federal disaster programs more efficient, and improve the safety and security of communities, states, and the Nation.

Our priorities for the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress include reversing funding cuts to key grant programs, increasing funding for EMAC and training and exercise programs, and passing a variety of critical emergency management legislation, among other priorities. With the passage of the *Disaster Management Costs Modernization Act* by the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee and reintroduction in the Senate, we are off to a strong start. Additionally, we will continue to emphasize the need to ensure that the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF) is adequately funded in a timely manner to avoid yet another implementation of Immediate Needs Funding (INF).

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## CONGRESSIONAL AND FEDERAL AGENCY ENGAGEMENT

In the last six months, NEMA pursued numerous engagements with Members of Congress and their staff as well as federal agency leadership to address timely emergency management issues and advance key priorities.

- In October, NEMA led a coalition of 12 other associations in sending a letter to Congressional leadership urging Congress to support S. 3071/H.R. 7671, the *Disaster Management Costs Modernization Act*, and its inclusion on the Senate Hotline and House Suspension Calendars at the earliest possible convenience.
- In November, NEMA and a coalition of 17 other associations sent a letter to House leadership and T&I Committee leadership urging them to quickly pass the *Disaster Assistance Simplification Act*, which requires FEMA to consolidate federal grant applications for disaster relief for disaster survivors into one centralized and universal application, relieving survivors from the burden of multiple long and strenuous application processes.
- In November, NEMA responded to a Question for the Record received following testimony from Russ Strickland—Maryland Secretary of Emergency Management and former NEMA President—at a House T&I Committee hearing in September focused on the role of implementing building codes in enhancing resiliency.
- In November, NEMA, IAEM, and BCEM sent a letter to House and Senate Appropriations Committee leadership to highlight shared priorities for a disaster supplemental. The letter included appropriations priorities and policy riders aimed at reducing the complexity of providing disaster assistance.
- In December, NEMA participated in a meeting with the Governmental Accountability Office (GAO) to support an ongoing project that is reviewing federal efforts to prepare for and respond to tornado disasters. Multiple state

directors participated, responding to GAO’s questions and offering perspectives on aspects that are unique to mitigating, responding to, and recovering from tornadoes.

- In January, NEMA sent a letter to the leadership of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee offering our support for the nomination of Governor Noem for DHS Secretary.
- In February, NEMA, in coalition with IAEM and BCEM, sent a letter to House and Senate leadership to express support for the *AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act* (S. 315/H.R. 979), noting that when disasters strike and broadband, electric power, and cell service fail, AM radio remains a resilient source of emergency updates.

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## **FISCAL YEAR 2025 BUDGET**

As of the time of this update in early March, the FY25 budget remains a work in progress and less than two weeks remain before the current Continuing Resolution expires. A key issue is that the Republican and Democratic appropriators do not yet have a topline spending deal. Additionally, Congressional Democrats want restrictions on how the Trump Administration spends the money that is appropriated, which Congressional Republicans have no interest in providing. Republican efforts to extend the 2017 tax cuts and raise the debt ceiling are also complicating negotiations. At this stage, the conventional wisdom is that a government shutdown is likely, starting on March 15, though negotiations continue.

As Congress continues its work, NEMA has published our [legislative priorities for the 119th Congress](#), including those related to appropriations. These appropriations priorities include reversing funding cuts to key grant programs and increasing funding for EMAC and training and exercise programs.

## **BILLS, HEARINGS & MARK-UPS**

### **DISASTER MANAGEMENT COSTS MODERNIZATION ACT REINTRODUCED AND RECEIVES HOUSE MARK-UP, PASSES OUT OF COMMITTEE**

By the end of the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, the *Disaster Management Costs Modernization Act* had cleared both the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee and House floor and was poised for passage by the Senate (either through regular order or as part of the disaster supplemental). The bill’s language was initially included in the first disaster supplemental package that was attached to the December CR. Unfortunately, later versions of the disaster supplemental were pared down and omitted the management costs language, ending the chances for the bill to pass in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress.

This bill enables grant recipients to spread available management funds across all open disasters rather than limiting expenditures to a single disaster and will help streamline the overall fund disbursement and disaster close-out process from the local level upward. Utilizing management funds across all open disasters will also help state, local, tribal, and territorial governments engage in longer-term resilience and capacity building to be able to address hazard mitigation in increasingly complex disaster responses. This bill does not represent new funding or a new program but will incentivize disaster close-out and drive down the costs of disasters nationwide.

In late February, Rep. Neguse (D-CO) reintroduced the *Disaster Management Costs Modernization Act* (H.R.744), which NEMA continues to strongly support. He was joined by multiple bipartisan co-sponsors, including Rep. Ezell (R-MS), Rep. Harder (D-CA), Rep. Stanton (D-AZ), Rep. Stansbury (D-NM), Rep. Bonamici (D-OR), Rep. Jayapal (D-WA), Rep. Titus (D-NV), and Rep. Raskin (D-MD). Just days later, the House T&I Committee voted to favorably report the *Disaster Management Costs Modernization Act*. Through this vote, the committee made great progress in advancing a bill that will reduce administrative burden, incentivize faster disaster closeout, and drive down disaster costs. Very shortly thereafter, Sen. Hassan (D-NH) and Sen. Lankford (R-OK) reintroduced the bill in the Senate (S. 773). NEMA is hopeful that the bipartisan bill will continue to make progress early in the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress and ultimately be signed into law.

### **CONGRESS PASSES DISASTER SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS BILL**

In late December, Congress passed a disaster relief supplemental bill—as part of the CR—to address critical funding shortfalls that coincided with significant response and recovery efforts following Hurricanes Helene and Milton. Relevant

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to our priorities, the supplemental provided \$29 billion for the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF), \$1.5 billion for the Hermit's Peak fire account, \$2.249 billion for loans made by the Small Business Administration, and \$12 billion for CDBG.

Discussions are currently ongoing about the need for an additional supplemental disaster relief bill, following the catastrophic wildfires across the Los Angeles area and estimated shortfall to the DRF by the end of the fiscal year. The details and timeline for the supplemental—including whether it would be conditioned on changes to state policy—are unclear at the time of this update.

### **DISASTER ASSISTANCE SIMPLIFICATION ACT AWAITING REINTRODUCTION**

The *Disaster Assistance Simplification Act* (S.1528) of the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress required FEMA to consolidate federal grant applications for disaster relief for disaster survivors into one centralized and universal application, relieving survivors from the burden of multiple long and strenuous application processes. A universal application would create a process by which information from disaster survivors could be shared across various federal agencies and allow survivors to complete one application for use by FEMA, HUD, SBA, and others. Despite broad, bipartisan support, S.1528 failed to pass in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress. A new bill has not yet been introduced in the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress, though NEMA expects that it will and continues to support the bill.

### **NEMA BEGINS DRAFTING AND SOCIALIZING HMGP REFORM PACKAGE**

Following a presidentially declared disaster, FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) is a primary source of federal mitigation assistance for state and local governments. There are, however, frequent challenges with spending the obligated HMGP funding in a timely manner and complaints over the consistency of FEMA's policies. Reforms are needed to streamline and standardize FEMA award reviews and enhance state and local capacity to manage HMGP grants. NEMA has developed a legislative proposal and is currently discussing it with Congressional offices.

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*This summary is provided courtesy of the NEMA Legislative Committee. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact NEMA Deputy Director, Matt Cowles at 202-624-5459 or [mcowles@csg.org](mailto:mcowles@csg.org) or Policy Analyst Matt Shade at 202-624-5458 or [mshade@csg.org](mailto:mshade@csg.org)*