



SUMMARY

In the period since the March Mid-Year Forum, the big focus in Washington has been the Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) budget process and the recent reconciliation bill (“One Big, Beautiful Bill”). The March 2025 Continuing Resolution (CR) funded the government until the end of FY25 (September 30, 2025), but now a long-term funding solution for FY26 remains elusive. As of the time of this update in mid-September, Congress is evaluating options for a short-term CR to fund the government and provide more time to work on full-year funding bills.

While the 119th Congress has so far been one of the least productive Congressional sessions in history, there has been movement on several emergency management bills. The most wide-reaching of the bills was the *Fixing Emergency Management for Americans (FEMA) Act*, which seeks to streamline the federal government’s disaster response and recovery programs while also making FEMA a cabinet-level agency. We also saw progress made on the *Disaster Assistance Simplification Act* and the *AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act*—bills that NEMA has publicly supported. Dozens of other emergency management bills have been introduced in Congress over the past six months, and NEMA has conducted formal reviews and provided feedback to Congressional offices for many of those bills.

The other significant development was the work of the FEMA Review Council, established earlier this year by Executive Order. NEMA has served as a resource to the FEMA Review Council, informing their discussions and helping to coordinate information collection. As of this update, the Council is expected to release their final report by the end of the year, though the path forward for implementing the recommendations through legislation or other means remains unclear.

Our priorities for the 119th Congress continue to be 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. 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).

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 March, NEMA joined a coalition of 16 other associations in sending a letter to Congressional leadership in support of the reauthorization of the FirstNet Authority. NEMA has also joined several other stakeholders to create the Preserve FirstNet Coalition.
- In April, NEMA sent an open letter to the FEMA Review Council outlining recommendations for reforming FEMA and offering to provide any insight, knowledge, or suggestions that would inform the work of the Review Council.
- In June, NEMA led a coalition of 11 other associations in sending a letter to Secretary Noem urging DHS to publish the Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFO) for the preparedness grants as soon as possible to ensure obligation prior to the end of the fiscal year.
- In July, Lynn Budd—NEMA President and Director of Wyoming’s Office of Homeland Security—participated in a virtual Hill briefing for Congressional staffers focused on the state and local role in emergency management.

NEMA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE — 2025 ANNUAL FORUM — CHEYENNE, WY

Other partners participating included the International Association of Emergency Managers, Pew Charitable Trusts, and BuildStrong America.

- In August, NEMA joined with IAEM and BCEM in sending a letter to Congressional leadership in support of the *AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act*.
- In August, NEMA joined with IAEM, BCEM, and BuildStrong America in sending a letter to the leadership of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee commending their introduction of the *Fixing Emergency Management for Americans (FEMA) Act* and for their diligence in seeking stakeholder feedback and support.

FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET

As of the time of this update in mid-September, the March 2025 Continuing Resolution (CR) is set to expire in less than two weeks (September 30, 2025). Congressional Republicans are pursuing a "clean" short-term CR to extend government funding through November 21 to give appropriators more time to finalize a full-year funding deal. Congressional Democrats, with the March funding fight still fresh on their minds, are signaling they will not accept another CR that ignores their policy priorities, especially the looming expiration of enhanced Affordable Care Act premium subsidies.

If nearly every House Republican gets on board with a short-term CR, they will not need to cut a deal with House Democrats. The Senate, however, cannot pass a bill with Republican votes alone. Given the current political environment, a government shutdown remains a real possibility. Moreover, even if a CR is ultimately passed, the path towards a full-year funding bill is murky.

On June 24, the House Appropriations Committee completed work on their proposed appropriations language for DHS for FY26. This came on the heels of the Administration's budget request, released on May 30. The bill largely restores many of the grant reductions seen in FY24 and upheld through the FY25 CR. The Committee approved nine bill or report amendments during the mark-up, one of which addressed the FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program and preventing waste, fraud, and abuse. The Senate has not yet released or marked up their FY26 DHS funding bill, but NEMA is hopeful that it will mirror the approach taken by the House and restore the grant cuts.

BILLS, HEARINGS & MARK-UPS

FIXING EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FOR AMERICANS (FEMA) ACT INTRODUCED AND RECEIVES HOUSE MARK-UP, PASSES OUT OF COMMITTEE

In September, the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee held a markup of the *Fixing Emergency Management for Americans (FEMA) Act of 2025* (H.R. 4669). The bipartisan bill was favorably reported by the Committee by a vote of 57-3. The *FEMA Act* now moves to the full House, where the timing of a potential vote is still unknown. The bill has not yet been introduced in the Senate.

The *FEMA Act* seeks to streamline the federal government's disaster response and recovery programs while also making FEMA a cabinet-level agency. The bill also aims to reward effective state and local preparedness; protect taxpayers; cut red tape; and ensure that relief efforts are fast, fair, and free from political bias.

The bill was introduced in late July by T&I Committee Chairman Graves (R-MO); Ranking Member Rick Larsen (D-WA); former Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management Subcommittee lead Webster (R-FL); and Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management Subcommittee Ranking Member Stanton (D-AZ). The *FEMA Act* was introduced following Graves' and Larsen's release of a discussion draft bill on May 8, 2025, and the subsequent feedback the Committee received on the draft from Members of Congress and the emergency management stakeholder community—including NEMA.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT COSTS MODERNIZATION ACT AWAITING CONGRESSIONAL ACTION

In late February, Rep. Neguse (D-CO) reintroduced the *Disaster Management Costs Modernization Act*, 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.

NEMA is hopeful that the bipartisan bill will continue to make progress in the 119th Congress and ultimately be signed into law. It has not yet been taken up by the full House and the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs has not yet marked up the bill.

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.

CONGRESS PASSES RECONCILIATION BILL

On July 1, the Senate passed its version of the reconciliation bill (*One Big Beautiful Bill Act*) by a narrow margin after making several changes to the version previously sent over by the House. On July 3, the House agreed to send the bill to the White House for the President's signature by a vote of 218-214. President Trump signed the bill into law on July 4, 2025. Budget reconciliation is a special parliamentary procedure of the United States Congress set up to expedite the passage of certain federal budget legislation.

The bill includes the following homeland security provisions:

- \$10 billion in grant funding to reimburse states for border security efforts during the Biden administration (may be limited in eligibility).
- \$500 million for state and local capabilities to detect threats from unmanned aerial systems (likely distributed via the State Homeland Security Grant Program [SHSP]).
- \$625 million for planning and security costs relating to the 2026 FIFA World Cup (likely distributed via SHSP).
- \$1 billion for planning and security costs related to the 2028 Olympics (likely distributed via SHSP).
- \$450 million for Operation Stonegarden.
- \$300 million to restart the Presidential Residence Protection Program.
- \$10 billion for DHS to “ensure adequate funding for border security across the board.”

DISASTER ASSISTANCE SIMPLIFICATION ACT RECEIVES SENATE MARK-UP, PASSES OUT OF COMMITTEE

In July, the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee approved the *Disaster Assistance Simplification Act* by a vote of 13-0. The bipartisan bill, introduced by Senator Peters (D-MI) along with co-sponsors Sen. Paul (R-KY), Sen. Tillis (R-NC), and Sen. Lankford (R-OK), aims to make it easier for individuals and communities to receive federal disaster aid. This bill 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 its report on improving the federal approach to disaster recovery, the Government Accountability Office identified consolidating the process into one application as an option to improve the federal government’s approach to disaster recovery. There are many types of federal assistance available to disaster survivors from different federal agencies and survivors seeking financial assistance from various entities after a natural disaster must repeatedly and unnecessarily answer the same application questions. These detailed applications are incredibly time-consuming and can take weeks or even months, in a situation where time is of the essence. Survivors can become so overwhelmed with the process that they simply give up before receiving the aid they need.

NEMA has strongly supported this bill and applauds the Committee for its vote. Lynn Budd, NEMA President and Director of Wyoming’s Office of Homeland Security, has stated “The Disaster Assistance Simplification Act is an urgently necessary step to help reduce the burden on disaster survivors as they apply for assistance...This initiative is a way for FEMA and other federal agencies to stay survivor-centric, and I applaud this common-sense and humane improvement...The universal application process allows for improved oversight, while simultaneously creating a more equitable, less burdensome process.”

AM RADIO ACT MAKES PROGRESS IN CONGRESS

In June, the *AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act* gained majority support in the House with the addition of 12 new co-sponsors. The bill now has bipartisan backing from 122 Republicans and 106 Democrats. Introduced in the House in February, the legislation has yet to be taken up by the House Energy and Commerce Committee. In the Senate, the bill has already achieved a significant majority. It passed the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation in February with bipartisan support and currently awaits a vote on the Senate floor.

If enacted, the bill would direct the Secretary of Transportation to issue regulations requiring that motor vehicles include access to AM radio broadcasts. Automakers failing to comply could face civil penalties. Additionally, the bill calls for the Government Accountability Office to evaluate whether other communications systems can match AM radio’s coverage and reliability for emergency public alerts.

NEMA has supported this bill and strongly encourages its passage. Emergency managers rely on AM radio as an essential tool to deliver timely, local, and life-saving information. When disasters strike and broadband, electric power and cell service fail, AM radio remains a trusted and resilient source of emergency updates. Unlike other communication methods, AM radio’s unmatched reach ensures no community is left without critical information--especially in rural and underserved areas. Of particular concern is that removing free, over-the-air AM radio from vehicles would directly undermine FEMA’s emergency alert system, which ensures the President can reach all Americans in a public safety or national security emergency.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM AROUND D.C.

FEMA REVIEW COUNCIL HOLDS PUBLIC MEETINGS AND WORKS TOWARDS A FINAL REPORT

In February, President Trump issued an EO titled “Council to Assess the Federal Emergency Management Agency” which established the FEMA Review Council, composed of relevant federal and private actors. It instructed the council to produce a report evaluating FEMA’s ability to effectively and impartially address disasters and provide other recommendations. Since then, the Council has held three public meetings and numerous regional listening sessions and subcommittee meetings.

The meetings highlighted the impacts and lessons from past disasters—including Hurricanes Katrina and Helene and the recent Texas flooding—and offered a glimpse of the types of recommendations the Council may include in their final report. Many of the Council members emphasized the importance of empowering state and local leadership, reiterating the principle that disasters must be locally executed, state managed, and federally supported. The Council also presented key findings

NEMA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE — 2025 ANNUAL FORUM — CHEYENNE, WY

from a nationwide survey of over 1,300 emergency management professionals. That survey yielded five key themes: accelerating federal funding, empowering state and local readiness, strengthening national lifelines, bolstering rural preparedness, and unifying the resilience network across sectors. The Council also noted that a common concern heard across the listening sessions and survey responses was the urgency to modernize FEMA’s funding mechanisms. Many participants, for example, called for more rapid, direct funding during disasters, rather than complex reimbursement models. Additionally, there was significant discussion of the need to better integrate non-profit and private-sector partners into disaster response and recovery efforts.

The Disaster Response and Recovery Assessment Subcommittee has presented further recommendations centered on coordination, standardization, and financial assistance. They called for increased state and local investment in preparedness, emphasized the need to speed up and streamline Individual Assistance and Public Assistance processes, and urged the states to reduce their dependence on federal funding. They also highlighted the need for an increased focus on mitigation, urging communities to invest in long-term strategies like building codes, safe rooms, and flood protections to reduce the human and economic toll of future disasters.

While there have been few surprises at the public meetings, it’s clear that the Council is making progress in their assessment of FEMA and NEMA looks forward to seeing their priorities and concerns being translated into actionable reform proposals. Once the report is released, it is very likely to impact the dynamics of the concurrent reform efforts underway in Congress.

PRESIDENT TRUMP SIGNS MULTIPLE EXECUTIVE ORDERS IMPACTING EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

In the last six months, President Trump issued numerous Executive Orders (EO) that are likely to impact the emergency management community:

In June, President Trump signed an Executive Order (EO) entitled [Empowering Commonsense Wildfire Prevention and Response](#). The EO instructs federal agencies to streamline the governance of wildfire response; enhance coordination with state, local, and tribal partners; and eliminate regulatory obstacles to key mitigation tools such as prescribed fire and fire retardants. The EO establishes a series of implementation deadlines, ranging from 90 to 210 days, covering actions such as the consolidation of federal wildfire programs, public release of satellite data, and the development of technology roadmaps and performance metrics.

In April, President Trump signed an EO entitled [Protecting American Communities from Criminal Aliens](#) that is likely to have significant impacts on emergency management grants and other federal assistance. The EO directs the Attorney General and Secretary of Homeland Security to public a list of states and jurisdictions that “obstruct the enforcement of federal immigration laws (sanctuary jurisdictions)” within 30 days. It also directs the Office of Management and Budget to “identify appropriate Federal funds to sanctuary jurisdictions, including grants and contracts, for suspension or termination, as appropriate.” For those jurisdictions who remain in violation, the Attorney General and Secretary of DHS “shall pursue all necessary legal remedies and enforcement measures to these violations and bring such jurisdictions into compliance with the laws of the United States.”

In August, President Trump signed an EO entitled [Improving Oversight of Federal Grantmaking](#) that may impact many of NEMA’s members. The EO establishes a new review process aimed at realigning discretionary grant awards to ensure that future grants reflect the President’s policy priorities. Among its provisions, the order directs agencies to cease grant-funded projects that are allegedly funding ideologically driven or anti-American projects, unsafe research, censorship tools, or services for “illegal immigrants”—and more. This EO also requires each agency head to designate a senior official (who must be a presidential appointee) to review new funding opportunity announcements and grant awards, ensuring alignment with “agency priorities and the national interest.” The immediate impacts of this EO remain to be seen, but grant project termination notices, slower application reviews and potential resubmissions, updated grant terms, and court challenges are all likely.

DHS RELEASES UPDATED STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR GRANTS

In April, DHS released updated FY25 Standard Terms and Conditions for financial assistance. The applicable DHS Standard Terms and Conditions for grants, cooperative agreements, fixed amount awards, and other types of federal financial assistance are based on the fiscal year in which the financial assistance award was funded. Most of the changes in the recent update—Version 3—are aimed at reinforcing recent Trump Administration executive orders.

The FY25 Terms and Conditions introduce several significant new compliance requirements reflecting evolving federal priorities, especially regarding research integrity, immigration cooperation, and anti-discrimination certifications related to DEI and boycott policies. Additionally, the updated FY25 terms and conditions enhance clarity on termination procedures and subrecipient monitoring.

FEMA’S PUBLIC ASSISTANCE MITIGATION COST SHARE INCENTIVES POLICY NO LONGER APPLICABLE FOR DISASTERS

In June, FEMA announced that the Public Assistance Mitigation Cost Share Incentives Policy is no longer applicable for any declared disaster, in alignment with President Trump’s EOs and Secretary Noem’s direction. This policy was originally issued Sept. 26, 2024. It outlined the actions that states, tribal nations, territories, and certain nonprofits could take to receive an increase in the federal cost share for their permanent recovery projects, including mitigation.

This rescission applies retroactively to all disasters declared since September 26, 2024, and is no longer applicable for any declared disaster moving forward.

FEMA ENDS BUILDING RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES (BRIC) PROGRAM

In April, FEMA announced that the FY24 NOFO for the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program has been cancelled. According to the memo, FEMA will:

- Not award all BRIC projects selected but not yet awarded;
- Not grant POP extensions on any project, without prior approval by the Senior Official Performing the Duties of the FEMA Administrator;
- Review all projects not completed but fully obligated to determine courses of action; and
- Stop the obligation of all management costs and review management costs requirements for partially or fully obligated projects.

If grant funds have not been distributed to states, tribes, territories, and local communities, funds will be immediately returned either to the Disaster Relief Fund or the U.S. Treasury. As FEMA’s largest pre-disaster mitigation program, this is a significant blow to state and local efforts to implement projects that reduce risks posed by natural hazards, support adoption and enforcement of codes and standards, and reduce disaster losses and protect life and property from future disasters.

In August, a federal court issued a temporary injunction preventing the Trump Administration from redirecting funds allocated to the BRIC program. This decision follows a lawsuit filed by 20 states, which argued that reallocating these funds would jeopardize local communities by weakening disaster preparedness efforts. The court ruled that the administration lacked the legal authority to repurpose funds that had been designated by Congress for the BRIC program. While this ruling does not release the funds to the states, it ensures that the funds cannot be used for purposes other than BRIC while the case continues to be litigated.

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 or Policy Analyst Matt Shade at 202-624-5458 or mshade@csg.org