

Summary

In the period since the Mid-Year Forum in March, Congress has faced numerous funding challenges that occupied much of their attention. The record-breaking Department of Homeland Security (DHS) shutdown finally came to an end on April 30 when the House approved the FY26 DHS funding bill that had previously passed the Senate. Now, several months later, Congress has managed to avoid another shutdown on October 1 by passing a continuing resolution (CR) that extends into FY27 through December 11. It remains to be seen whether they will be able to pass full-year appropriations bills for FY27 before that date, or if they will sustain any number of CRs to keep the government funded.

Despite hopes that the FEMA Review Council report would rebuild momentum for FEMA reform in Congress, it has largely not materialized. In the months since the report was released in May, the full House has not yet voted on the *FEMA Act*. There has been preliminary work occurring in the Senate on a potential FEMA reform package that could incorporate elements of both the FEMA Review Council report and the *FEMA Act*, but there is not yet a draft bill or any framework for what a bill might look like.

Looking ahead, advancing large-scale FEMA reform legislation during the 119th Congress will prove difficult. Congress faces an increasingly compressed legislative calendar, with attention now largely focused on the upcoming midterm elections. Combined with competing policy priorities, Congress is nearly "out of runway" to enact major FEMA reforms before the political environment becomes even more challenging for bipartisan legislative action. With Congress in recess until after the elections, any significant legislating on large-scale FEMA reform will likely have to wait for the lame-duck session (or more likely the new 120th Congress).

Our priorities for the remainder of the 119th Congress and into the new Congress will continue to be reversing funding cuts to key grant programs, increasing funding for Emergency Management Assistance Compact (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.

Congressional And Federal Agency Engagement

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

- In February, NEMA participated in Congressional briefing sponsored by the Congressional Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Caucus on the importance of public radio in emergency response.
- In February, NEMA participated in a Congressional staff briefing on the economics of resilience sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce.
- In March, NEMA joined the National Governors Association (NGA), International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM), BuildStrong America, Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM), and National League of Cities for a Capitol Hill briefing on FEMA reform hosted by Senators Welch (D-VT) and Kim (D-NJ).
- In June, NEMA joined with 16 other national organizations in sending a letter to the leadership of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation urging their consideration of H.R.7386 to reauthorize the federal FirstNet Authority.

- In June, NEMA coordinated a discussion between state directors and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to share state perspectives on the FirstNet public-safety broadband network, intergovernmental budgeting for disasters, and state and local capacity to manage disasters.
- In June, NEMA participated in FEMA's 2026 Gulf and Atlantic Hurricane Summit which convened emergency management leaders from across the Gulf and Atlantic coasts to strengthen coordination and readiness at the start of hurricane season.

Fiscal Year 2027 Budget

On June 11, the House Appropriations Committee completed their work on the FY27 funding bill for the DHS. This funding would be for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2026. It is unclear when this bill may see floor action. The House's FY27 DHS bill includes increases nearly across the board for FEMA grants, training, and exercise programs, though still not to the funding levels seen prior to the large FY24 cuts. NEMA will be watching closely to see how the Senate approaches these priorities and will continue emphasizing the value of these investments to communities nationwide. The Senate has not yet released any of their full-year appropriations bills.

In the absence of FY27 appropriations bills, a continuing resolution (CR) was necessary to ensure the federal government after September 30. On July 21, the House passed a CR to extend federal funding levels through December 4. Shortly after, the Senate passed a competing CR extending funding through December 11. After significant debate, the House ultimately passed the Senate's version of the CR by a 370-48 vote on September 1. The CR largely maintains current federal funding levels through December 11 and was signed by the President. The bill prevented yet another lapse in federal funding when the current fiscal year ended on September 30 and provides additional time for Congress to negotiate FY27 appropriations.

For emergency management, the CR provides important near-term stability during the peak of the hurricane and wildfire seasons by maintaining funding for FEMA and other federal response and recovery activities. The legislation also temporarily blocks a proposed Office of Management and Budget rule that would subject federal grant funding to review by political appointees. However, the extension has set Congress up with a highly compressed legislative timeline. With the next funding deadline falling shortly after the November elections, Congress will have limited time during the lame-duck session to complete the remaining appropriations bills. Ultimately, another CR extending into 2027 may be necessary.

Bills, Hearings & Mark-Ups

FIXING EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FOR AMERICANS (FEMA) ACT CONTINUES TO AWAIT ACTION IN THE FULL HOUSE AND SENATE COMMITTEE

After being favorably reported by the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee by a vote of 57-3, the *Fixing Emergency Management for Americans (FEMA) Act of 2025* (H.R. 4669) now awaits action in the full House, where no vote has yet been scheduled. The bill has not yet been introduced in the Senate, however NEMA continues engaging the Senate on possible options for action in that chamber. 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, cut red tape, and ensure that relief efforts are fast and free from political bias.

In an effort to regain momentum for FEMA reform, House T&I Committee leadership used a July 15 hearing to renew support for the bipartisan *FEMA Act*, urging House leadership to bring the bill to the floor after it stalled following committee approval. Witnesses—including former FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate, local officials, industry representatives, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce—expressed broad support for the legislation, arguing it would improve the nation's EM system. Despite the committee's push for House consideration of the *FEMA Act*, prospects for enactment during the 119th Congress remain limited due to the compressed legislative calendar and the approaching midterm elections,

among other roadblocks. NEMA plans to continue working with Congress to advance FEMA reform and will keep members informed of legislative developments.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT COSTS MODERNIZATION ACT CONTINUES TO AWAIT CONGRESSIONAL ACTION

Last year, 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*. Very shortly thereafter, Sen. Hassan (D-NH) and Sen. Lankford (R-OK) reintroduced the bill in the Senate as S.773. While NEMA is hopeful that the bipartisan bill will 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. Delayed action on this bill is primarily due to identical language being included in the *FEMA Act*.

CDBG-DR AUTHORIZATION SIGNED INTO LAW THROUGH 21ST CENTURY ROAD TO HOUSING ACT

This summer, House and Senate leadership reached agreement on the *21st Century Road to Housing Act* (H.R. 6644). While the legislation is primarily focused on housing policy, it includes a significant emergency management provision in the authorization of the Community Development Block Grant–Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program. The bill passed the Senate on June 22 by a vote of 85-5 and then passed the House the following day by a vote of 358-32. President Trump then unexpectedly cancelled a signing ceremony for the bill despite previously indicating his approval. Ultimately, the President neither signed nor vetoed the bill, causing it to become law 10 days after Congress presented the bill to the White House.

Previously, CDBG-DR lacked permanent authorization, relying on implied authorization through supplemental appropriations following major disasters. This process often delayed recovery funding by a year or more as Congress evaluated damages and negotiated funding levels. This law established, for the first time, a standing CDBG-DR program. The authorization includes a three-year sunset provision. Other key provisions include the creation of a Long-Term Disaster Recovery Fund, a HUD Office of Disaster Management and Resiliency, formula-based allocation of recovery resources, and codified requirements governing duplication of benefits and data sharing with FEMA and the Small Business Administration (SBA).

FIRSTNET REAUTHORIZATION PASSES HOUSE, AWAITS ACTION IN SENATE

On March 25, the *First Responder Network Authority Reauthorization Act of 2026* (H.R.7386) was marked up and favorably reported out of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, sending it to the full house floor. On April 20, the House brought H.R.7386 to the floor for consideration, with multiple bipartisan Members speaking in favor of the bill that went on to pass via voice vote with no opposition. The bill is now awaiting consideration by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

The bill passed by the House would extend the authorization of the program to September 30, 2037. Additionally, the bill would increase the representation of active public safety professionals on the FirstNet Board, reinforce the FirstNet Authority's ability to deploy emergency response capabilities and resources to emergencies and disasters; set strategic priorities for the network, and more. NEMA has supported the reauthorization of FirstNet and recently signed onto a letter of support along with a coalition of national organizations to urge the Senate to act on the bill. Time is becoming a major factor in this effort as the Authority's current authorization expires February 2027.

HOUSE COMMITTEE FAVORABLY REPORTS POST-DISASTER PROTECTION ACT

On September 15, the bipartisan Post-Disaster Protection Act (HR 8409), led by Rep. Frost (D-FL), Rep. Ezell (R-MS), Rep. King-Hinds (R-MP), Rep. Moskowitz (D-FL), and Rep. Donalds (R-FL), passed the House T&I Committee's markup by voice vote. The bill now awaits consideration on the House floor.

The legislation would extend the deadline for applicants to appeal denials of FEMA disaster assistance from 60 to 90 days, matching the amount of time FEMA has to review an appeal. In our endorsement of the bill, NEMA noted that one of the biggest challenges of responding to and recovering from a disaster is managing the complexities of federal programs. The *Post-Disaster Protection Act* will bring applicant deadlines into alignment with federal review periods and help ease the burden on disaster survivors.

HOUSE PASSES TWO BIPARTISAN BILLS TO STRENGTHEN NATIONAL SECURITY

On July 13, the House passed two bipartisan homeland security bills to strengthen DHS's ability to improve emergency preparedness and bolster the nation's response to evolving threats. Both bills had previously been favorably reported by the House Homeland Security Committee on June 24.

- H.R. 8874, the *Homeland Security Capabilities Preservation Reporting Act of 2026*: Requires FEMA to report on how changes in homeland security grant funding affect the preparedness capabilities of communities.
- H.R. 3106, the *Weatherizing Infrastructure in the North and Terrorism Emergency Readiness (WINTER) Act*: Requires DHS to assess and prepare for terrorist threats that could coincide with extreme cold weather events and critical infrastructure disruptions.

These bills now move to the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs for consideration.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM AROUND D.C.

FEMA REVIEW COUNCIL RELEASES REPORT WITH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FEMA REFORM

Nearly a year after the Council's first public meeting, the FEMA Review Council released its final report on May 7. NEMA put out the following statement upon release of the report:

"NEMA appreciates the work of the FEMA Review Council and looks forward to continued collaboration with FEMA, and our federal and Congressional partners as these recommendations are evaluated and implemented. NEMA broadly supports the overarching principles outlined by the Council of less complexity in federal programs, faster assistance, and cost savings at all levels. We also strongly support the recommended phased approach over 2-3 years to allow state and local governments to build any additional capacity needed. Strengthening national preparedness requires a unified national approach, and NEMA remains committed to supporting policies and strategies that put disaster survivors and impacted communities first."

Implementation of the recommendations in the report will not be a straightforward process, however, and progress in the months following its release has been very limited. While some can be done through policy changes and Executive Order, others will require changes to regulation or legislation (or a combination, in some cases). From the state perspective, implementation will also require significant planning, budgeting, and staffing decisions to ensure their emergency management agencies have the capacity needed to shoulder the increased responsibilities. NEMA continues to emphasize the need for states and FEMA/DHS to maintain open lines of communication about implementation.

FEMA PROVIDES UPDATE ON BRIC PROGRAM AFTER FEDERAL COURT RESTORES PROGRAM

On March 18, FEMA issued an official notice to all states, Tribal Nations, and territories on the status of their Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program projects. This notice followed the December federal court ruling that blocked the federal government from ending the BRIC program. Additionally, in February, the coalition of states that brought the lawsuit filed a motion to enforce, arguing that FEMA had not abided by the court's previous order to reverse

BRIC's termination and enable existing BRIC projects to move forward. In its announcement, FEMA stated that the agency plans to fully resume programmatic support for BRIC awards and sub applications, such as award monitoring and closeout, and completing pre-award review activities. Shortly after, on March 25, FEMA published the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the FY24 and FY25 BRIC program, making $1 billion dollars available for pre-disaster mitigation projects nationwide.

WHITE HOUSE RELEASES NATIONAL RESILIENCE STRATEGY

On June 23, the White House released the National Resilience Strategy. The National Resilience Strategy articulates how the US will advance the resilience objectives identified in the 2025 National Security Strategy. Resilience will be achieved through applying the four key tenets across the four core domains. The tenets are designed to reduce risk, improve reliability of infrastructure and continuity of key services, deliver faster response and recovery, and promote investments that bring value and opportunity for Americans.

This Strategy sets the path to resilience by prioritizing risk identification and management as the central enabler of national policy, identifying where investment, modernization, and simplification will yield the highest returns. This will be further enabled through implementation of a National Risk Register and subsequent risk doctrine by stakeholders, including American citizens, industry, state and local governments, and the federal government.

MULTI-STATE LAWSUIT CHALLENGING NEW FEMA/DHS GRANT CONDITIONS

On July 23, attorneys general from 23 states and DC, along with the Governors of Kentucky and Pennsylvania acting in their official capacities, filed suit in federal court in Rhode Island against FEMA and DHS. The suit challenges three new sets of conditions that FEMA and DHS have attached to major emergency management grants, including the Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) and the Emergency Management Performance Grant program (EMPG).

The complaint challenges three conditions:

- To receive HSGP funding, states would have to verify all voter roll citizenship using DHS's SAVE system, verify the citizenship of poll workers, transition away from QR code voting equipment to hand marked paper ballots, and conduct post-election audits under rules DHS has not yet written. States that do not comply lose at least 20 percent of their HSGP award.
- DHS reinserted immigration cooperation requirements, such as information sharing, detainer compliance, and jail access for ICE, into the 2026 grant terms. These conditions are nearly identical to ones a federal judge already struck down and permanently enjoined last year in an earlier phase of this same litigation.
- New language would let FEMA cancel a grant at any time if it decides the award no longer fits agency priorities or the national interest, even if those priorities are defined after the grant was awarded.

The plaintiffs are asking the court to declare all three conditions unlawful, vacate them, and permanently enjoin FEMA and DHS from enforcing them or conditioning funding on compliance with them.

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