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News Release

Emergency Managers Urge Swift Passage of FEMA Assistance Relief Act, H.R. 8266

Nov. 17, 2020 (Falls Church, Va.) – As the House of Representatives considers their suspension calendar for today, the nation’s state and local emergency managers reiterate our strong support for the bipartisan H.R. 8266, the *FEMA Assistance Relief Act*.

Given the frequency and severity of disasters this fall, we urge swift passage of this legislation in the House as it will make timely changes to assistance provided during an unparalleled 2020 disaster season. This legislation makes a critical change to FEMA assistance by adjusting the FEMA cost share for all Emergencies and Major Disasters declared in calendar year 2020 to not less than 90 percent federal and 10 percent non-federal. From hurricanes, wildfires, tornadoes, and myriad other events, this will provide much needed relief to state and local governments that are struggling with a pandemic, higher-than-usual unemployment, and economic recovery.

When introduced on Sept. 29, the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) and the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) joined with nine other state and local organizations in a letter supporting this legislation. Those organizations also supported the provision in this legislation that adjusts the FEMA cost share for all COVID-19 related Emergency and Major Disaster declarations to 100 percent federal. The statute that the President invoked (Section 501(b) of the *Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act* (42 U.S.C. 5121-5207)) to declare a national emergency for COVID-19 acknowledges that “... the primary responsibility for response rests with the United States because... the United States exercises exclusive or preeminent responsibility and authority.” Therefore, the shift to 100 percent federal cost share is wholly justified, and we appreciate Congress’s willingness to address our collective ask for this waiver.

Finally, the bill clarifies eligible assistance under the Stafford Act for purposes of COVID-19 related disasters. On Aug. 25, 2020, a similar group of stakeholder organizations sent a letter to FEMA Administrator Gaynor asking that guidance on eligibility not be changed while state and local governments remain in a state of response for COVID-19. This legislation will clarify Congressional intent and ensure state and local governments can continue procuring supplies such as personal protective equipment (PPE) and other services for applicants including public schools, public transit, and courthouses.

This legislation will provide much needed assistance to state, local, tribal and territorial governments. It is an important and urgently needed step that will help our nation combat this global pandemic and a continually challenging 2020 disaster season.

IAEM-USA, the nation’s largest emergency management professional association, is a non-profit professional organization representing

more than 5,000 emergency management and homeland security professionals for local communities, state and federal disaster officials, private sector, non-governmental organizations and others involved in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from all types of disasters including acts of terrorism. IAEM provides access to the largest network of emergency management experts who can provide advice and assistance, the Certified Emergency Manager program, annual scholarships, a comprehensive monthly newsletter, and more.

Established in 1974, NEMA represents the emergency management directors of the 50 states, territories, and the District of Columbia. These professionals are responsible to their governors for all-hazards emergency preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery from all emergencies, disasters, and threats to the homeland. NEMA is a non-profit, non-partisan organization headquartered in Lexington, Kentucky, and an affiliate of the Council of State Governments.

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