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New Report Calls for National Mitigation Investment Strategy to Lessen Impact of Natural Disasters

Rising costs associated with Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy demonstrate the need for a move from off-budget post-disaster spending to on-budget pre-disaster preparation – a shift which can be paid for by utilizing mismanaged dollars that have gone unused in the wake of Hurricane Sandy

WASHINGTON, DC – Ten days before the third anniversary of Hurricane Sandy – the second costliest hurricane in United States history – the BuildStrong Coalition today released a new report calling for a National Mitigation Investment Strategy, a comprehensive federal plan to enhance the nation’s overall disaster resilience.

“As the cost of natural disasters continues to rise and taxpayers pay more of the costs for cleanup and recovery efforts, it is clear that we need to do something different to prepare for natural disasters,” said former FEMA Director and BuildStrong Coalition Senior Advisor David Paulison. “Our current approach to natural disasters enables an endless cycle of rebuild and repair, leaving homes, businesses, and Americans’ livelihoods in harm’s way.”

To combat this “endless cycle of rebuild and repair,” the report recommends investing in pre-disaster mitigation through:

- Establishing a new FEMA-administered resilient construction state and local building code grant program to help qualified states defray cost of enforcing building codes
- Increasing FEMA’s funding for pre-disaster mitigation activities by \$100 million per year from fiscal years 2016 to 2020
- Passing new congressional initiatives to create resilient construction incentives for states, builders, and individual homeowners:
 - The Safe Building Code Incentive Act
 - H.R. 1748 would give a powerful incentive to states to adopt and enforce stronger statewide building codes
 - The Disaster Savings and Resilient Construction Act
 - H.R. 3397 would establish a clear and permanent tax credit for owners and/or contractors who use resilient construction techniques when building and renovating homes and commercial structures in federally declared disaster areas
 - FEMA Disaster Assistance Reform and Reauthorization Act

- H.R. 1471 would establish a much needed assessment of current federal disaster policy and recommend ways to reduce taxpayers' exposure as well measures to reduce overall losses from natural disasters.

Cognizant of federal funding constraints, the report identifies a funding source for this new investment strategy. Nearly \$30 billion of the \$36.99 billion in non-FEMA funding designated to government programs in the Sandy Supplemental remains unspent in the coffers of various government agencies, and the report recommends investing just \$1.265 billion of this unused funding to strengthen and protect our communities.

“We must shift from ineffective and reactive post-disaster spending to a proactive system that focuses on protecting the nation from the rising occurrence of major disasters,” Paulison stated.

BuildStrong is a coalition of national business and consumer organizations, companies, and emergency management officials dedicated to promoting stronger building codes.

The full report and a short informational video explaining the proposed National Mitigation Investment Strategy can be found at sandy.buildstrongamerica.com.

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