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## **BuildStrong Coalition Lauds Congressional Hearing on Mitigating Disaster Damage**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – The BuildStrong Coalition commended the U.S. House of Representatives Transportation & Infrastructure Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management for holding a hearing today on mitigating damage and recovering quickly from disasters as part of its plan for Building a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Infrastructure for America. The hearing featured testimony from BuildStrong Senior Advisor and former FEMA Administrator R. David Paulison, who strongly advised the committee to reform federal disaster spending. It also featured testimony from Nationwide Property and Casualty Operations President and COO Mark Berven, who spoke on behalf of the BuildStrong Coalition.

“With the growing impact of natural disasters on communities around the country and the start of Atlantic hurricane season on the horizon, it is critical that we do more to proactively limit the damage caused by these events,” said BuildStrong Chairman Jimi Grande. “BuildStrong applauds Chairman Barletta and Ranking Member Johnson for taking a serious look at this issue to ensure investment in our nation’s country’s infrastructure protects America’s homes and businesses in the face of a rising number of severe storms.”

During the hearing, Paulison highlighted the need for reforming the nation’s disaster spending model to focus on mitigation through actions including: enhancing pre-disaster mitigation funding, consolidating disaster spending under FEMA, and creating a post-disaster mitigation incentive that rewards states with modern building codes. He also advocated reforming the federal-state disaster cost share system by reducing federal exposure from 75% to 60% and allowing states to buy up their federal share by taking certain mitigation steps, such as adopting and enforcing a statewide building code.

“In no uncertain terms, I want to impress on the committee today that we have a moment — right now — to make America resilient again and save both lives and taxpayer dollars,” said Paulison. “In my 35 years of experience dealing with natural disasters at the federal, state, and local levels, including my service as Administrator of FEMA from 2005 to 2009, I can tell you that our federal policy regarding disasters does not do nearly enough to prevent infrastructure failure before a disaster strikes.”

Berven also called to reform the federal government's current approach to disaster spending during his testimony, indicating that it has "left communities across the nation vulnerable ahead of the next storm." He also highlighted the prospect of improving the nation's infrastructure as an opportunity for the Trump Administration and Congress to create a lasting impact on enhancing disaster resiliency in the U.S.

The BuildStrong Coalition is a group of firefighters, emergency responders, insurers, engineers, architects, contractors and manufacturers, as well as consumer organizations, code specialists, and many others committed to building a more resilient America. For more on the Coalition, visit [buildstrongamerica.com](http://buildstrongamerica.com).

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