



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 15, 2015

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BuildStrong Coalition Announces Support of Safe Building Code Incentive Act and FEMA Disaster Assistance Reform Act of 2015

Safe Building Code Incentive Act is the centerpiece of BuildStrong's legislative agenda; would help eliminate risks to people, property, the environment and the economy

WASHINGTON, DC – The BuildStrong Coalition today announced support of the Safe Building Code Incentive Act, H.R. 1748, which was introduced yesterday by U.S. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL) in the U.S. House and would provide additional disaster relief assistance to states that adopt and enforce strong building codes. Uniform statewide adoption and enforcement of model building codes helps to eliminate long-term risks affecting people, property, the environment and ultimately the economy.

The Safe Building Code Incentive Act is the centerpiece of the BuildStrong Coalition's legislative agenda. With billions of dollars spent annually by the federal government and private sector on disaster relief and the rebuilding of communities, legislation that encourages widespread adoption of model building codes will enhance the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) goal of making sure cities and towns are better equipped to prepare for, prevent the occurrence of, respond to and recover from disasters. A 2005 National Institute of Building Sciences' study concluded that for every \$1 spent on mitigation at the federal level, the American taxpayer saves \$4 in disaster assistance.

During a markup hearing today in the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, U.S. Rep. Jeff Denham (R-CA) offered the Safe Building Code Incentive Act as an amendment to the FEMA Disaster Assistance Reform Act. "This amendment would simply add the text of H.R. 1748 the Safe Building Code Incentive Act into the bill," said U.S. Rep. Jeff Denham (R-CA). "Strong building codes are a proven defense against natural disasters. As I've seen in my home state of California, strong building codes have saved countless lives and properties from damage that result in earthquake activity. Without strong building codes many communities in California would be at significant risk if even a minor earthquake were to strike." Rep. Denham ultimately withdrew the amendment due to lack of an offset.

The Coalition also announced its support of the FEMA Disaster Assistance Reform Act of 2015, H.R. 1471, which was marked up by the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee today and passed out of committee. "The FEMA Disaster Assistance Reform Act authorizes a much needed assessment of trends in disaster losses and will provide valuable information on ways to better manage spiraling costs for the American taxpayer," said Jimi Grande, chairman of the BuildStrong Coalition. "We are confident that this study will produce credible

recommendations on ways to streamline federal disaster spending in order to bend the cost curve for future generations by putting more money on budget for mitigation.”

The legislation authorizes a study of trends in the rising costs of disasters in the United States. It will lead to recommendations that will reduce the loss of life and property, and enable cost savings and improved efficiency and effectiveness for FEMA.

“This bill commissions a comprehensive review of growing disaster losses and response costs the nation has experienced over the last decades. Experts estimate that over \$1 trillion in disaster losses have occurred in North America since 1980,” said U.S. Rep Lou Barletta (R-PA), Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management. “We need to understand why and what can be done to reduce those losses to protect our citizens. It’s been over 20 years since we’ve had a comprehensive look at disaster spending. I believe it’s time for a big picture assessment of what is driving disaster losses and costs and review if we as a nation are responding in the most appropriate and cost effective way.”

In January, former FEMA Director Robert David Paulison [called on](#) Congress to take a proactive approach to disaster mitigation by establishing a Blue Ribbon Commission to study the rapidly rising costs associated with disaster relief. According to Paulison, who is an advisor to the BuildStrong Coalition, natural disaster declarations have spiked from an average of 23 per year during the Reagan Administration to 65 per year during the Obama Administration.

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