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Former FEMA Administrator Urges Passage of Disaster Mitigation Legislation

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Former FEMA Administrator R. David Paulison urged Congress to adopt stronger disaster mitigation measures at a hearing of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management yesterday. Testifying at the hearing on behalf of the BuildStrong Coalition, Paulison provided detailed recommendations to the committee for effective FEMA implementation of provisions in the Disaster Recovery Reform Act (DRRA). The legislation has passed the House but has yet to be taken up by the Senate, and the conversation centered on the reforms outlined in the legislation that would overhaul the country’s current approach to disasters and save lives and tax dollars, among other topics.

“With another busier-than-expected hurricane season ahead, it is more urgent than ever that Congress sends the entire Disaster Recovery Reform Act to the President’s desk,” Paulison said. “One provision would drastically boost the size of the nation’s Pre-Disaster Mitigation account, arming communities all over the nation with new tools to mitigate against the risk of wind damage, flooding, and wildfires.”

Paulison noted that the 2017 Hurricane Season caused \$265B in damages and produced 3 of the top 5 costliest storms since 1980, in pointing out that the provisions in the DRRA adopted as part of the Bipartisan Budget Act will help prevent disaster losses through enhanced building code requirements and mitigation efforts.

Regarding FEMA’s ongoing work to create the cost share incentive guidance, Paulison told the committee that, “it will be critical to push for incentives offered to be housed in state mitigation plans and building codes that can achieve a significant impact.”

“The cost share provision approved by Congress and signed into law by the president is a major step toward a federal disaster policy that will save lives and better protect communities, but it’s only the first step,” said BuildStrong Coalition Chairman Jimi Grande. “Now Congress needs to pass the remaining provisions of the Disaster Recovery Relief Act, which will arm communities across the nation with new tools to mitigate and prepare for disasters.”

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. Learn more at buildstrongamerica.com.