



## NATIONAL CONFERENCE of STATE LEGISLATURES

*The Forum for America's Ideas*

July 26, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

**Deb Peters**  
*Senator – District 9  
South Dakota  
President, NCSL*

**Chuck Truesdell**  
*Fiscal Analyst  
Office of Budget Review  
Legislative Research Commission  
Kentucky  
Staff Chair, NCSL*

**William T. Pound**  
*Executive Director*

Dear Senators:

On behalf of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), we write in support of the Disaster Recovery Reform Act (DRRA) and urge you to pass the DRRA as part of the Senate's Federal Aviation Act (FAA) reauthorization legislation. The DRRA is an important piece of legislation that will assist states in their recovery efforts from a record-setting 2017 hurricane season. The House passed its version of the DRRA earlier this year as part of its FAA reauthorization bill. We urge the Senate to follow suit, and we thank Chairman Johnson and Ranking Member McCaskill for their leadership on DRRA thus far. To refrain from passing the DRRA as part of the Senate's FAA reauthorization legislation would relinquish an important opportunity to pass much-needed reforms to our disaster response framework.

NCSL encourages Congress and the administration to recognize that states have competing priorities for limited funding and there can be no one-size-fits-all approach to disaster preparedness and response. Though natural disasters pose a significant and growing threat, states must continually balance fiscal needs as particular circumstances dictate. With that in mind, NCSL supports continued and flexible disaster relief funding from the federal level that is distributed directly to states, and allows for state legislative oversight. For this reason, NCSL supports sections within the DRRA that:

- 1) Reauthorize federal funding for Emergency Management Planning Grants (EMPG) and the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC).
- 2) Allow states to use federal disaster assistance to directly administer temporary and permanent housing assistance for disaster victims. This ensures such funding is managed by state officials that are much closer to disaster-affected communities and more familiar with their state's unique risk profile, infrastructure, and grant recipients.
- 3) Establish increased and fixed reimbursement rates for state and local governments that have incurred direct or indirect administrative costs during disaster recovery project implementation.

States facing extensive risk are also already investing in disaster mitigation initiatives. In the last few years, state legislative trends have emerged in areas ranging from building code and infrastructure updates to the development of interagency disaster mitigation task forces and financial incentives in various forms. Provisions within the DRRA that establish the National Public Infrastructure Pre-disaster Mitigation Assistance Program, allowing states to use up to six percent of Disaster Recovery Fund money for mitigation purposes, would provide welcome support in these endeavors.

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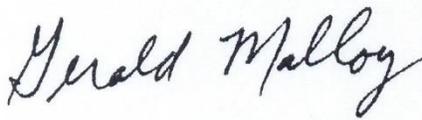
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Regardless of the phase of a disaster, consultation and communication between federal and state governments is critical to determining appropriate levels of federal support. NCSL encourages Congress and the administration to maintain and expand efforts to include states in any attempt to reform standards, policies, and procedures. NCSL thus applauds language in the Senate's DRRA legislation that recognizes this important issue by requiring the Administrator to engage in meaningful consultation with state and local governments when formulating proposed changes to the Per Capita Impact Indicator.

NCSL supports the passage of the Disaster Recovery Reform Act and the improvements it makes to federal-state disaster cost-sharing arrangements, disaster mitigation efforts, and intergovernmental consultation at a time when threats posed by natural disasters appear only to be intensifying. NCSL welcomes the opportunity to work with the administration and members of Congress to discuss state impact issues and provide research in this area. For more information, please contact NCSL staff Susan Parnas Frederick ([susan.frederick@ncsl.org](mailto:susan.frederick@ncsl.org)) or Lucia Bragg ([lucia.bragg@ncsl.org](mailto:lucia.bragg@ncsl.org)) in NCSL's Washington, DC office.

Sincerely,



**The Honorable Gerald Malloy**  
South Carolina Senate



**The Honorable Timothy Johns**  
South Dakota House of Representatives

Co-Chairs, NCSL Law, Criminal Justice & Public Safety Committee

CC: Members of the U.S. Senate, Senator Ron Johnson, Senator Claire McCaskill