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S. 2109, Directing Dollars to Disaster Relief Act

FLOOR SITUATION

On Tuesday, February 23, 2016, the House will consider S. 2109, the Directing Dollars to Disaster Relief Act of 2015 under suspension of the rules. S. 2109 was introduced on September 30, 2015 by Sen. Ron Johnson (R-WI), and was referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, which ordered the bill to be reported with an amendment in the nature of a substitute favorably on October 7, 2015. The bill passed the Senate with an amendment by unanimous consent on February 9, 2016.

SUMMARY

S. 2109 would require the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to develop and implement an integrated plan to reduce administrative costs for major disasters no later than a year after the date of enactment. Additionally, FEMA would be required to issue annual reports to Congress on the development and implementation of the plan for the previous fiscal year.

BACKGROUND

FEMA is the primary provider of federal assistance in response to major disasters. From FY 2004 through FY 2013, FEMA administered $95.2 billion for 650 declared major disasters. Of these expenses, approximately $12.7 billion was used to cover FEMA's administrative costs that support the delivery of disaster assistance.

Recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports have documented the increase of administrative costs for major disaster assistance in the last two decades. While the growth in administrative costs is in part due to the increased number of disaster declarations within the same time period, average administrative cost percentages have risen as well. FEMA has recognized and initiated efforts to address the problem of rising administrative costs. However, a September 2012 GAO report found that FEMA did not strictly adhere to the guidelines of its 2010 memo, which created best practices and guidelines for management to follow. [1]

[1] See S. Report 114-173 at 2.

COST

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates implementing S. 2109 would have an insignificant effect on the federal budget over the 2016-2020 period. Enacting S. 2109 would not affect direct spending or revenues; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply. Enacting the bill would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2026.

STAFF CONTACT

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