

The Future of Resilience and Adaptation Policy Priorities for 2023 -2024

Overview

Extreme weather and natural disasters are increasing in frequency and severity. The number of events resulting in more than [\\$1 billion in damages](#) is growing. Companies and communities across America are working to plan ahead of the next crises. But they need additional tools, funding, and technical assistance to address a host of risks, including droughts, earthquakes, floods, and wildfires. More must be done to attack systematic risks and reduce the insurance gap that will decrease future losses and ensure long-term resilience.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, in collaboration with the [Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative](#), The Pew Charitable Trusts, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, convened a series of [events](#) during late July/early August 2022 to explore the future of federal resilience policy.

Key Discussion Points

- Resilience and adaptation are about people and communities.
- Resilience should be elevated as a national priority, on equal footing with mitigation.
- With recent Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding, money is no longer the major problem. More tools and partnerships (PPPs) are needed.
- Current statutes do not have all the solutions and may contain barriers to action.
- The most vulnerable communities that need to build resilience and adapt to climate risks often do not have the wherewithal to access the funding. Technical assistance is needed, and federal collaboration with private providers offers potential solutions.
- Focus cannot be only on floods, but other hazards such as droughts, heat, and wildfires.
- More data is needed to target the most at-risk communities.
- Innovative resilience solutions, including decentralized and bidirectional energy and water solutions should be considered.

Current Policy

Congress passed the [Disaster Recovery Reform Act](#) as part of the Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization Act of 2018, which was signed into law on October 5, 2018. The law allows for up to 6% of annual disaster spending into a new national public infrastructure Predisaster Mitigation fund that provides risk-reducing predisaster assistance annually through the [Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities](#) (BRIC) program at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Moreover, the Disaster Cost Share Incentive provisions passed as part of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 allows for FEMA to incentivize qualifying states with a reduced match. The federal disaster assistance cost share reform incentive provision establishes criteria for FEMA to pay an increased 10% (up to 85% from the previous 75% baseline) in federal funds post-disaster to

qualifying states that have taken steps to increase their disaster resilience and decrease their disaster risks. A blog on this cost share provision can found [here](#).

[The Safeguarding Tomorrow through Ongoing Risk Mitigation Act](#) (STORM Act) enacted on January 1, 2021, establishes state-based revolving loan funds to provide low interest loans for communities across the nation to implement predisaster mitigation projects.

There are a number of resilience-focused provisions in the [IIJA](#):

- \$500 million for [new grant programs](#) from EPA for water and wastewater utilities to address extreme weather risks, among others.
- \$1 billion for BRIC.
- \$500 million for STORM.
- \$3.5 billion for [flood mitigation assistance programs](#).
- \$8.3 billion for USBR [drought and wildfire work](#) in the American West.

FEMA also announced an allocation of \$2.3 billion for BRIC and \$800 million for the Flood Mitigation Assistance program for FY 2023.

Finally, Congress passed several additional legislative approaches including:

- The [Disaster Resiliency Planning Act](#) would require federal agencies to consider more effective asset management strategies when developing sustainability and resilience plans.
- [The Community Disaster Resilience Zones Act](#), among other efforts, would ensure that more funding is directed to small, disadvantaged communities that are most at risk to extreme weather and other climate hazards.

2023 Policy Opportunities and Priorities

- The [National Climate Adaptation and Resilience Strategy Act](#) calls for a national resilience strategy and chief resilience officer to unify and integrate government resilience programs and initiatives to a beyond federal approach.
- The [Resilient America Act](#) would boost predisaster mitigation funding from a maximum of 6% to 15% of post-disaster spending through BRIC. The return on investment from predisaster investments is as much as 11 to 1. Specifically, the Resilient AMERICA Act increases funding and incentives, fosters the adoption and enforcement of stronger building codes, and ensures the resources and support needed to help state and local governments achieve resilience. It passed overwhelmingly with bipartisan support in the House during the last Congress by a vote of 383-41.
- The [SHELTER Act](#), and other bonding, tax credits, and incentives.
- Andrew Young Safeguarding the Mississippi River Together Act provides the largest regional resilience and adaptation coordination for America's most climate-vulnerable communities.
- Climate RESILIENCE Act allows for federal disaster declarations on account of intense heat or cold.

- Permanent authorization of the Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Response program with a focus on predisaster mitigation.
- The [Disaster Act](#) requires the Office of Management and Budget to submit an annual report to Congress on all disaster-related assistance provided by the federal government. The report must include all federal obligations related to disaster response, recovery, mitigation efforts, and administrative costs associated with these activities for specified agencies and programs.
- Flood Resilience and Taxpayer Savings Act ensures federal investments account for future flood risk.
- National Flood Insurance Program reauthorization, including a [flood mitigation revolving loan fund](#).
- The [Save Our Sequoias Act](#) streamlines forest management projects to reduce wildfire risk to old growth forests in California.
- Technology innovation and public-private partnerships for adaptation (RIFIA).
- The [Water Data Act](#) establishes a federal framework for sharing data and information across agencies.

More technical assistance is also needed to ensure that these communities have the resources to pursue and secure funding, especially for small and disadvantaged communities. Wildfire, drought, and nature-based funding and solutions are also priorities.

We should focus on implementation of IJJA, BRIC, STORM, CRDZA, DOT Protect, and the National Resiliency Planning Act. Challenges in implementation, including consistent approaches to cybersecurity, building codes, and cost-benefit analysis, should be addressed.

Other Needed Innovation

- **Pilot more contingency planning.** Sixty-five percent of small businesses have no continuity plans in place. Pilots, including grants, should be made available to cities that catalyze strategic planning among small businesses and small communities.
- **Incentivize and institutionalize resilience.** Additional funding, technical assistance, and other benefits should be provided to states and communities that are most active in implementing predisaster mitigation, including green infrastructure and other nature-based solutions.

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