

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 861

AN ACT

To streamline the sharing of information among Federal disaster assistance agencies, to expedite the delivery of life-saving assistance to disaster survivors, to speed the recovery of communities from disasters, to protect the security and privacy of information provided by disaster survivors, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
 2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Disaster Assistance
 5 Simplification Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF A UNIFIED DISASTER ASSIST-**
 7 **ANCE INTAKE PROCESS AND SYSTEM.**

8 The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emer-
 9 gency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.) is amended
 10 by adding at the end the following:

11 **“SEC. 707. ESTABLISHMENT OF A UNIFIED DISASTER AS-**
 12 **SISTANCE INTAKE PROCESS AND SYSTEM.**

13 “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

14 “(1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term ‘Adminis-
 15 trator’ means the Administrator of the Federal
 16 Emergency Management Agency.

17 “(2) APPLICANT.—The term ‘applicant’
 18 means—

19 “(A) an individual, business, or organiza-
 20 tion that applies for disaster assistance from a
 21 disaster assistance program;

22 “(B) an individual, business, or organiza-
 23 tion on behalf of which an individual described
 24 in subparagraph (A) applies for disaster assist-
 25 ance from a disaster assistance program; and

1 “(C) an individual, business, or organiza-
2 tion that seeks assistance as a beneficiary of a
3 State, local government, or Indian tribal gov-
4 ernment that received assistance under a dis-
5 aster assistance program.

6 “(3) DISASTER ASSISTANCE AGENCY.—The
7 term ‘disaster assistance agency’ means—

8 “(A) the Federal Emergency Management
9 Agency; and

10 “(B) any Federal agency that provides dis-
11 aster assistance to individuals, businesses, orga-
12 nizations, States, local governments, Indian
13 tribal governments, communities, or organiza-
14 tions that the Administrator certifies as a dis-
15 aster assistance agency in accordance with sub-
16 section (f) to carry out the purposes of a dis-
17 aster assistance program.

18 “(4) DISASTER ASSISTANCE INFORMATION.—
19 The term ‘disaster assistance information’ includes
20 any personal, biographical, demographic, geo-
21 graphical, financial, application decision, or other in-
22 formation that a disaster assistance agency, or a re-
23 cipient of a Federal block grant from a disaster as-
24 sistance agency, is authorized to collect, maintain,
25 disclose, or use to—

1 “(A) process an application for disaster as-
 2 sistance from a disaster assistance program; or

3 “(B) otherwise carry out the purpose of a
 4 disaster assistance program.

5 “(5) DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.—The
 6 term ‘disaster assistance program’ means—

7 “(A) a program that provides disaster as-
 8 sistance to individuals and households under
 9 title IV or V in accordance with sections 408
 10 and 502; or

11 “(B) any other assistance program author-
 12 ized by a Federal statute or funded with Fed-
 13 eral appropriations under which a disaster as-
 14 sistance agency awards or distributes disaster
 15 assistance to an individual, household, or orga-
 16 nization, or provides a Federal block grant for
 17 these purposes, that arises from a major dis-
 18 aster or emergency declared under section 401
 19 or 501, respectively, including—

20 “(i) disaster assistance;

21 “(ii) long-term disaster recovery as-
 22 sistance;

23 “(iii) the post-disaster restoration of
 24 infrastructure and housing;

1 “(iv) post-disaster economic revitaliza-
2 tion;

3 “(v) a loan authorized under section
4 7(b) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C.
5 636(b)); and

6 “(vi) food benefit allotments under
7 section 412 of this Act and section 5(h) of
8 the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7
9 U.S.C. 2014(h)).

10 “(6) RECORD.—The term ‘record’ has the
11 meaning given the term in section 552a of title 5,
12 United States Code.

13 “(b) UNIFIED DISASTER ASSISTANCE INTAKE PROC-
14 ESS AND SYSTEM.—

15 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 360 days
16 after the date of enactment of the Disaster Assist-
17 ance Simplification Act, the Administrator shall, in
18 consultation with appropriate Federal, State, local,
19 and Indian tribal governments and entities, develop
20 and establish a unified intake process and system
21 for applicants for disaster assistance provided by a
22 disaster assistance agency to—

23 “(A) facilitate a consolidated application
24 for any form of disaster assistance provided by
25 a disaster assistance agency when appropriate

1 to support the nature and purposes of the as-
 2 sistance;

3 “(B) carry out the purposes of disaster as-
 4 sistance programs swiftly, efficiently, fairly, and
 5 in accordance with applicable laws and privacy
 6 and data protections; and

7 “(C) support the detection, prevention, and
 8 investigation of waste, fraud, abuse, or discrimi-
 9 nation in the administration of disaster assist-
 10 ance programs.

11 “(2) CAPABILITIES OF THE CONSOLIDATED AP-
 12 PPLICATION SYSTEM.—The unified intake process and
 13 system established under paragraph (1) shall—

14 “(A) accept applications for disaster assist-
 15 ance programs;

16 “(B) allow for applicants to receive status
 17 updates on applications for disaster assistance
 18 programs;

19 “(C) allow for applicants to update dis-
 20 aster assistance information throughout the re-
 21 covery journeys of those applicants;

22 “(D) allow for the distribution of informa-
 23 tion on additional recovery resources to disaster
 24 survivors that may be available in a disaster-
 25 stricken jurisdiction, in coordination with ap-

1 appropriate Federal, State, local, and Tribal part-
2 ners;

3 “(E) provide disaster survivors with infor-
4 mation and documentation on the applications
5 of those disaster survivors for a disaster assist-
6 ance program;

7 “(F) allow for the distribution of applica-
8 tion data to support faster and more effective
9 distribution of Federal disaster assistance, in-
10 cluding block grant assistance, for disaster re-
11 covery;

12 “(G) allow for disaster assistance agencies
13 to communicate directly with disaster survivors;
14 and

15 “(H) contain other capabilities determined
16 necessary by the heads of disaster assistance
17 agencies.

18 “(3) UPDATES.—Not later than 30 days after
19 the date on which the Administrator receives a re-
20 quest from a disaster assistance agency to update
21 questions in the consolidated application described in
22 paragraph (1) needed to administer the disaster as-
23 sistance programs of the disaster assistance agency,
24 the Administrator shall make those updates.

1 “(c) AUTHORITIES OF ADMINISTRATOR.—The Ad-
2 ministrator may—

3 “(1) collect, maintain, disclose, and use disaster
4 assistance information, including such information
5 received from any disaster assistance agency, with
6 any other disaster assistance agency for purposes of
7 subsection (b)(1); and

8 “(2) subject to subsection (d), authorize the col-
9 lection, maintenance, disclosure, and use of disaster
10 assistance information collected on or after the date
11 of enactment of the Disaster Assistance Simplifica-
12 tion Act by publishing a notice on a public website
13 that—

14 “(A) includes a detailed description of—

15 “(i) the specific disaster assistance in-
16 formation authorized to be collected, main-
17 tained, disclosed, and used;

18 “(ii) why the collection, maintenance,
19 disclosure, or use of the disaster assistance
20 information is necessary to carry out the
21 purpose of a disaster assistance program;

22 “(iii) how the collection, maintenance,
23 disclosure, and use of disaster assistance
24 information incorporates fair information
25 practices; and

1 “(iv) the disaster assistance agencies
2 that will be granted access to the disaster
3 assistance information to carry out the
4 purpose of any disaster assistance pro-
5 gram; and

6 “(B) provides that the submission of an
7 application through a unified disaster applica-
8 tion constitutes prior written consent to disclose
9 disaster assistance information to disaster as-
10 sistance agencies for the purpose of section
11 552a(b) of title 5, United States Code.

12 “(d) COLLECTION AND SHARING OF RECORDS AND
13 INFORMATION.—

14 “(1) EFFECT OF PUBLICATION OF NOTICE ON
15 PUBLIC WEBSITE.—The publication of a notice by
16 the Administrator on a public website of a revision
17 to the system of records of the unified intake process
18 and system established under subsection (b)(1) prior
19 to any new collection, maintenance, disclosure, or
20 use of records to carry out the purposes of a disaster
21 assistance program with respect to a major disaster
22 or emergency declared by the President under sec-
23 tion 401 or 501, respectively, of this Act shall be
24 deemed to satisfy the notice and publication require-
25 ments of section 552a(e)(4) of title 5, United States

1 Code, for the entire period of performance for any
2 assistance provided under a disaster assistance pro-
3 gram.

4 “(2) PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT WAIVER.—

5 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Upon the declaration
6 of a major disaster or emergency pursuant to
7 section 401 or 501, respectively, of this Act, the
8 Administrator may waive the requirements of
9 subchapter I of chapter 35 of title 44, United
10 States Code (commonly known as the ‘Paper-
11 work Reduction Act’), with respect to the vol-
12 untary collection of information specific to the
13 declared major disaster or emergency needed to
14 carry out the purposes of a disaster assistance
15 program.

16 “(B) DURATION.—A waiver described in
17 subparagraph (A) shall be in effect for the en-
18 tire period of performance for any assistance
19 provided under a disaster assistance program
20 with respect to a declared major disaster or
21 emergency.

22 “(C) TRANSPARENCY.—If the Adminis-
23 trator waives the requirements described in sub-
24 paragraph (A), the Administrator shall—

1 “(i) promptly post on a public
2 website—

3 “(I) a brief justification for the
4 waiver; and

5 “(II) the agencies and offices to
6 which the waiver shall apply;

7 “(ii) update the information posted
8 under clause (i), as applicable; and

9 “(iii) comply with the requirements of
10 subchapter I of chapter 35 of title 44,
11 United States Code (commonly known as
12 the ‘Paperwork Reduction Act’) upon the
13 expiration of the period of performance of
14 any assistance provided under a disaster
15 assistance program if the collection of in-
16 formation may be utilized for the purposes
17 of supporting the disaster assistance pro-
18 gram in future major disaster or emer-
19 gency declarations.

20 “(D) EFFECTIVENESS OF WAIVER.—Any
21 waiver under subparagraph (A) shall take effect
22 on the date on which the Administrator posts
23 information on the internet website as provided
24 for under subparagraph (C).

1 “(e) DATA SECURITY.—The Administrator shall fa-
 2 cilitate the collection of disaster assistance information
 3 into a unified application only after—

4 “(1) the Administrator certifies that the unified
 5 application substantially complies with the data se-
 6 curity standards established pursuant to subchapter
 7 II of chapter 35 of title 44, United States Code, and
 8 any other applicable Federal information security
 9 policy;

10 “(2) the Secretary of Homeland Security pub-
 11 lishes a privacy impact assessment for the unified
 12 application that is similar to the privacy assessment
 13 conducted under section 208(b)(1)(B) of the E-Gov-
 14 ernment Act of 2002 (44 U.S.C. 3501 note); and

15 “(3) the Administrator, in consultation with
 16 disaster assistance agencies, publishes standard
 17 rules of behavior for disaster assistance agencies and
 18 personnel granted access to disaster assistance infor-
 19 mation to protect such information from improper
 20 disclosure.

21 “(f) CERTIFICATION OF DISASTER ASSISTANCE
 22 AGENCIES.—

23 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator may
 24 certify a Federal agency as a disaster assistance
 25 agency after posting an agreement between the Ad-

1 administrator and the Federal agency on a public
2 website that contains the detailed terms of the
3 agreement.

4 “(2) CONTENTS OF AGREEMENT.—An agree-
5 ment between the Administrator and a Federal
6 agency described in paragraph (1) shall state that
7 the Federal Emergency Management Agency and
8 the Federal agency will—

9 “(A) collect, disclose, maintain, and use
10 disaster assistance information in accordance
11 with—

12 “(i) this section; and

13 “(ii) subject to subsection (i)(2), any
14 existing policies of the Federal Emergency
15 Management Agency and the Federal
16 agency for information protection and use;

17 “(B) train any personnel granted access to
18 disaster assistance information on the rules of
19 behavior established by the Administrator under
20 subsection (e)(3);

21 “(C) in the event of any unauthorized dis-
22 closure of disaster assistance information—

23 “(i) not later than 24 hours after dis-
24 covering the unauthorized disclosure—

1 “(I) in the case of an unauthor-
2 ized disclosure by the Federal agency,
3 notify the Administrator of the disclo-
4 sure; and

5 “(II) in the case of an unauthor-
6 ized disclosure by the Federal Emer-
7 gency Management Agency, notify dis-
8 aster assistance agencies of the disclo-
9 sure;

10 “(ii) cooperate fully with the Adminis-
11 trator and disaster assistance agencies in
12 the investigation and remediation of the
13 disclosure; and

14 “(iii) cooperate fully in the prosecu-
15 tion of a person responsible for the disclo-
16 sure; and

17 “(D) assume responsibility for any com-
18 pensation, civil liability, or other remediation
19 measure awarded by a judgment of a court or
20 agreed upon as a compromise of any potential
21 claim by or on behalf of an applicant, including
22 by obtaining credit monitoring and remediation
23 services, for an improper disclosure of disaster
24 assistance information that is—

1 “(i) caused, directly or indirectly, by
2 the acts or omissions of an officer, em-
3 ployee, or contractor of the Federal agen-
4 cy; or

5 “(ii) from any electronic system of
6 records that was created or maintained by
7 the Federal agency pursuant to section
8 552a(e) of title 5, United States Code.

9 “(g) REPORTS.—

10 “(1) FEMA.—Not later than 1 year after the
11 date of enactment of this section, and every year
12 thereafter for 2 years, the Administrator, in coordi-
13 nation with the heads of disaster assistance agen-
14 cies, shall submit to Congress a report on the imple-
15 mentation of this section, including—

16 “(A) how disaster assistance agencies are
17 working together to implement the require-
18 ments under this section;

19 “(B) the effect of this section on disaster
20 survivor burden and the speed and efficiency of
21 delivering disaster assistance; and

22 “(C) a description of any other challenges
23 that require further legislative action.

24 “(2) GAO.—Not later than 3 years after the
25 date of enactment of this section, the Comptroller

1 General of the United States shall submit to Con-
2 gress a report on how the implementation of this
3 section has affected the disaster survivor experience,
4 and any recommendations for improvements to the
5 requirements under this section.

6 “(h) BRIEFINGS.—Not later than 90 days after the
7 date of enactment of this section, and again not later than
8 180 days after the date of enactment of this section, the
9 Administrator shall brief Congress on—

10 “(1) the status of the implementation of the re-
11 quirements under this section; and

12 “(2) how disaster assistance agencies are work-
13 ing together to implement the requirements under
14 this section.

15 “(i) RULES OF CONSTRUCTION.—

16 “(1) INAPPLICABILITY OF MATCHING PROGRAM
17 PROVISIONS.—The disclosure and use of disaster as-
18 sistance information subject to the requirements of
19 section 552a of title 5, United States Code, among
20 disaster assistance agencies or with State, local, or
21 Tribal governments carrying out disaster assistance
22 programs shall not—

23 “(A) be construed as a matching program
24 for the purpose of section 552a(a)(8) of title 5,
25 United States Code; or

1 “(B) be subject to subsection (e)(12), (o),
 2 (p)(1)(A)(ii), (q), (r), or (u) of section 552a of
 3 title 5, United States Code.

4 “(2) AUTHORITIES IN OTHER LAWS.—Nothing
 5 in this section shall be construed to affect the au-
 6 thority of an entity to share disaster assistance in-
 7 formation regarding programs funded or facilitated
 8 by the entity in accordance with any other law or
 9 agency policy.

10 “(3) APPLYING TO MULTIPLE PROGRAMS.—
 11 Nothing in this section shall be construed to require
 12 an applicant to apply to more than 1 disaster assist-
 13 ance program.

14 “(4) PROGRAM AUTHORIZATION.—Nothing in
 15 this section shall be construed to authorize a pro-
 16 gram that is not authorized by law as of the date
 17 of enactment of this section.”.

Passed the Senate December 16, 2025.

Attest:

Secretary.

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To streamline the sharing of information among Federal disaster assistance agencies, to expedite the delivery of life-saving assistance to disaster survivors, to speed the recovery of communities from disasters, to protect the security and privacy of information provided by disaster survivors, and for other purposes.