



Durbin and Duckworth lead legislation to map urban flooding and help FEMA better assess risks

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WASHINGTON –U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL), Marco Rubio (R-FL), and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), and U.S. Representatives Mike Quigley (D-IL-05), Dutch Ruppersberger (D-MD-02) and John Culberson (R-TX-07) today introduced the bipartisan, bicameral *Flood Mapping Modernization and Homeowner Empowerment Pilot Program Act of 2018* to enhance the mapping of urban flooding to prevent associated damage. The legislation will help give cities and towns the tools they need to address flooding in a local context and then encourage the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to apply lessons learned nationwide.

“For many homes in urban areas, just a few inches of rain can cause thousands of dollars in damages,” said Durbin. “And the truth of the matter is, we don’t have much data on the flood risk from the kind of weather that turns our cities streets, businesses, and homes into a flooded mess, let alone the information we need on how we might better prepare for these catastrophes in the future. This legislation will remedy that by helping local governments understand the scope of the problem and develop solutions. With storms growing stronger and more common year after year, we need to gain a better understanding of flooding in our cities.”

“From coast to coast, urban flooding has a unique and powerful ability to wreak havoc in our communities, leaving constituents feeling helpless in the aftermath,” said Quigley. “Whether it results in property damage, severe economic challenges, health and safety risks, or all of the above, residents are often unaware of the dangers they face during these extreme weather events. In order to help cities, like Chicago, better defend themselves against flooding disasters, our bipartisan legislation will equip them with the research and resources they need to proactively plan ahead.”

“Every year, communities in Illinois and across the country struggle to plan for and recover from urban flooding,” said Duckworth. “One of the best things we can do to protect our cities and towns is ensure they have the tools, resources and research they need to prepare for urban flooding. This legislation and the pilot program it establishes will do just that, leading to a better understanding of flood risks and how we can prevent and mitigate damage caused by urban flooding.”

Urban flooding frequently occurs outside the regulatory floodplain, and FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) do not always accurately indicate flood risk in these areas, resulting in uncertainty of the hazards at hand. The Illinois General Assembly conducted a [study](#) in June 2015, which examined flood insurance claims in the state and revealed that over 90% of urban flooding damage claims from 2007 to 2014 were outside the FIRM floodplain.

By providing demonstration grants for cities to invest in innovative mapping technologies, the *Flood Mapping Modernization and Homeowner Empowerment Pilot Program Act of 2018* allows constituents the opportunity more accurately assess their flood risks. The legislation also allow them to develop better communication tools, urban design measures, and flood mitigation policies that would put them in a stronger position to protect their communities. Once each pilot program expires, the information gathered and lessons learned would be sent to Congress and FEMA to fully assess each city’s best practices and to apply them to FEMA’s National Flood Mapping Program.

In 2015, Rep. Quigley and Sen. Durbin [introduced the bicameral *Urban Flooding Awareness Act*](#) to address increased flooding in urban communities and to find solutions for the urban communities impacted. It created, for the first time, a federal definition of urban flooding and requires the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), in coordination with related Federal agencies, to conduct a nationwide study of urban flooding and flood damage in order to develop flood prevention practices and policies.