



# **Duckworth, Warren, Thompson, Ramirez, Reintroduce Legislation To Address Inequities In Federal Disaster Response**

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) joined U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), U.S. House of Representatives Homeland Security Committee Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS-02) and U.S. Representative Delia C. Ramirez (D-IL-03) to reintroduce the *Federal Emergency Management Advancement of Equity Act (or FEMA Equity Act)* to address systemic inequities in the federal government’s response to disasters and how it distributes assistance. The

legislation follows a growing body of evidence and reporting that low-income disaster survivors and disaster-impacted communities of color are less likely to receive crucial federal emergency assistance compared to higher-income counterparts.

“As Americans, it’s our responsibility to support one another in times of need—including when our most disadvantaged communities are devastated by disasters and severe weather,” said Senator Duckworth. “Disasters don’t discriminate against communities based on how much money their residents make—and neither should FEMA. I’m proud to join my colleagues in reintroducing this legislation to help ensure all Americans have access to the resources and support they need when disaster strikes.”

Last year, Senator Duckworth also [introduced](#) bipartisan legislation to help ensure that disaster relief efforts provide comprehensive support to all parents and infants, including guaranteeing nursing parents’ ability to continue to breastfeed in times of crisis.

“For too long, frontline communities have been disproportionately impacted by the effects of natural disasters, and this injustice is exacerbated by relief distribution,” said Senator Warren. “In the wake of the recent floods in Massachusetts, it’s more important than ever that FEMA’s disaster response centers equity so our communities can access the recovery resources they need to get back on their feet and thrive.”

“In March, my district was impacted by deadly tornadoes that left immense destruction. The importance of ensuring equity in disaster response is felt by my community daily and I know my community is not alone,” said Congressman Thompson. “That’s why I, along with colleagues, created the [Congressional Disaster Equity and Building Resilience Caucus](#) this May to promote the benefits of resilience and the need for equity in the country’s disaster preparedness and response infrastructure. The Federal government – and particularly FEMA – needs to prioritize disaster assistance equity to reduce barriers to recovery. I applaud the Biden Administration’s ongoing efforts to make FEMA’s programs more equitable and accessible, however, Congress needs to do more to support these efforts. This legislation will ensure that all disaster survivors – no matter their zip code or background – are considered and supported before, during, and after disasters. I look forward to working on getting this legislation considered in the House.”

“We recognize that disasters impact everyone and reveal deeply ingrained disparities and inequities that have persisted for generations. Racial and ethnic vulnerable communities with limited financial means and less access to resources bear the brunt of these disasters, primarily due to systemic and environmental injustices plaguing our society. The FEMA Equity Act is crucial to rectifying this injustice,” said Congresswoman Ramirez. “As a Congressional Disaster Equity and Building Resilience

Caucus member, I am honored to co-lead the Federal Emergency Management Advancement of Equity Act alongside the Committee on Homeland Security's Ranking Member Representative Bennie G. Thompson and Senator Elizabeth Warren to standardize FEMA's approach and bring equity to the federal disaster response. This critical legislation addresses systemic inequities in disaster response and recovery, which have far-reaching impacts, including in Illinois' Third Congressional District and our great state."

The Biden Administration has prioritized addressing inequities in the federal disaster management programs. Last year, FEMA identified "instilling equity as a foundation of emergency management" as the first goal of its agency strategic plan. However, internal FEMA analysis shows that low-income homeowners that survived disasters were denied financial assistance almost twice as often as high-income homeowners and that FEMA approved housing assistance to higher-income renters at a rate that was 23% higher than low-income renters.

The *FEMA Equity Act* would:

- Improve FEMA's data collection systems to better identify inequities within Agency programs, including barriers to access and disparate outcomes.
- Direct FEMA to design and integrate criteria into all of their programs to increase equity, prioritizing programs that provide long-and short-term support for local governments, individual housing assistance and mitigation funding to address disasters.
- Authorize in law FEMA's Equity Enterprise Steering Group and the Equity Advisor to counsel the FEMA Administrator to increase equity across FEMA programs and policies.
- Direct the Government Accountability Office to examine the factors FEMA considers when evaluating requests for a major disaster or emergency declaration.

Along with Duckworth and Warren, this legislation is co-sponsored in the Senate by U. S. Senators Ed Markey (D-MA) and Cory Booker (D-NJ).

Along with Thompson and Ramirez, this legislation is co-sponsored in the House by U. S. Representatives Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC at large), Nydia Velázquez (D-NY-07), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX-18), Al Green (D-TX-09), Brian Higgins (D-NY-26), Yvette Clarke (D-NY-11), Donald Payne, Jr. (D-NJ-10), Tony Cárdenas (D-CA-29), Eric Swalwell (D-CA-14), Dina Titus (D-NV-01), Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-NJ-12), Troy Carter, Sr. (D-LA-02), Robert Garcia (D-CA-42), Jared Moskowitz (D-FL-23), Shri Thanedar (D-MI-13) and Dan Goldman (D-NY-10).