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FEMA Improvement, Reform, and Efficiency (FIRE) Act

In light of year after year of increasingly catastrophic wildfires in the West, it has become clear that FEMA's current statutory authorities and practices for helping communities prepare for and recover from wildfires need to be updated to reflect the "new normal" facing Western states.

The *FEMA Improvement, Reform, and Efficiency (FIRE) Act* would make a number of changes to the *Stafford Act* that governs FEMA – which was written when FEMA primarily focused on hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods – to ensure that FEMA's disaster preparedness and response efforts fully address the unique nature of wildfires and their impacts on communities.

What the *FIRE Act* would do:

- **Pre-Deployment of Resources Before Potential Wildfire Disasters:** Allow FEMA to pre-deploy resources during red flag warnings, the most likely time for catastrophic wildfires, just as FEMA does in advance of hurricane warnings.
- **Improved Relocation Assistance:** Ensure that public infrastructure in fire-prone areas is eligible for relocation assistance, which is currently based on flooding-specific regulations.
- **Equity:** Require FEMA to provide culturally-competent crisis counselors and case managers to ensure that underserved and disadvantaged communities receive equity when accessing federal disaster assistance.
- **Tribal Emergency Operations Centers:** Ensure that tribal governments can also access assistance to upgrade their emergency operation centers. This provides tribal governments equal standing with state and local governments.
- **Housing Assistance:** Require FEMA to prioritize survivors of disasters when selling portable housing units, and direct FEMA to study how to improve housing assistance for low-income residents who live in multi-family housing or in doubled-up situations.
- **Consistency in Federal Support for Wildfire Recovery:** Ensure that FEMA provides consistency when responding to wildfire-specific damage, such as repairing and mitigating contamination from melted infrastructure.
- **Response Speed and Fire Insurance:** Require a study to improve the speed of assistance in response to wildfires and develop potential solutions to address the increasing lack of available and affordable wildfire insurance.