

December 20, 2007: Sanchez Introduces Disaster Relief Bills

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Rep. Sanchez Introduces Disaster Relief Bills

Legislation would help victims of natural disasters and terrorist attacks, including people affected by the recent California wildfires

WASHINGTON, DC- This week, Rep. Loretta Sanchez (D-California), Vice Chair of the Committee on Homeland Security introduced bills H.R. 4689 and H.R. 4919, legislation that would authorize FEMA to provide federal assistance for qualified individuals in designated disaster areas for rebuilding their homes and keeping up with their mortgage payments.

H.R. 4689, the Disaster Rebuilding Assistance Act would provide federal assistance to underinsured disaster victims. Many individuals whose homes are destroyed by natural disasters find that their insurance policies do not provide enough money to cover rebuilding costs. The bill would increase the amount of federal aid available for rebuilding homes and securing temporary housing. Qualified households could receive up to \$50,000 in assistance. For disasters occurring in high-cost states, this legislation gives FEMA the discretion to increase the \$50,000 cap, if necessary.

H.R. 4919, the Mortgage and Rental Disaster Relief Act would authorize FEMA to provide mortgage and rental assistance for qualified individuals in communities that the President designates as disaster areas. The legislation authorizes temporary mortgage and rental payments for households with adjusted gross incomes of \$100,000 or less, in high-cost states. Households in lower-cost states could be eligible if their annual adjusted gross incomes do not exceed \$75,000. The bill ensures strict criteria for disaster-related income loss and establishes caps at 18 months on the length of assistance under this program.

"Our government cannot turn a blind eye to Americans who may have lost their homes and businesses to natural disasters. We must help by providing temporary assistance for the affected families so they can invest in rebuilding their communities," said Sanchez.

This year, President Bush declared 63 disasters in 35 states in response to disasters that include: the Southern California wildfires, severe storms, flooding, mudslides and tornadoes.

S. 2388 and S 2386 are the Senate companion bills authored by California Senator Diane Feinstein.

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