

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. _____

To direct the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a program to provide to rural communities technical assistance in recovering from disasters, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. WELCH (for himself and Mr. SANDERS) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a program to provide to rural communities technical assistance in recovering from disasters, 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 “Rural Recovery Act
5 of 2024”.

6 **SEC. 2. RURAL DEVELOPMENT DISASTER RECOVERY TECH-**
7 **NICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.**

8 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

1 (1) DISASTER.—The term “disaster” means a
2 major disaster declared by the President under the
3 Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency
4 Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.).

5 (2) ELIGIBLE RURAL COMMUNITY.—The term
6 “eligible rural community” means each rural com-
7 munity all or part of which is within an area covered
8 by a disaster.

9 (3) PROGRAM.—The term “program” means
10 the program established under subsection (b).

11 (4) RURAL COMMUNITY.—

12 (A) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subpara-
13 graph (B), the term “rural community” means
14 any census designated place with a population
15 of less than 20,000.

16 (B) MODIFICATION; WAIVER.—The Sec-
17 retary may, as the Secretary determines to be
18 necessary—

19 (i) modify the definition of “rural
20 community” under subparagraph (A); or

21 (ii) waive the applicability of the defi-
22 nition of “rural community” under this
23 paragraph to a particular area.

24 (5) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
25 the Secretary of Agriculture.

1 (b) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall establish
2 within the rural development mission area a program to
3 provide technical assistance for eligible rural communities.

4 (c) PROVIDERS OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—Technical assistance under
6 the program shall be provided by—

7 (A) a State office of the rural development
8 mission area;

9 (B) an entity described in paragraph (2)
10 that enters into a contract with a State office
11 of the rural development mission area; or

12 (C) both entities described in subpara-
13 graphs (A) and (B).

14 (2) ELIGIBILITY OF CONTRACTORS.—

15 (A) IN GENERAL.—An entity eligible to
16 enter into a contract under paragraph (1)(B) is
17 a public body or private nonprofit corporation
18 described in section 306(a)(26)(A) of the Con-
19 solidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7
20 U.S.C. 1926(a)(26)(A)).

21 (B) PRIORITY.—In entering into contracts
22 under paragraph (1)(B), the Secretary shall
23 give priority to entities described in section
24 306(a)(26)(B) of the Consolidated Farm and

1 Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C.
2 1926(a)(26)(B)).

3 (3) COORDINATION.—A provider of technical
4 assistance under the program shall, to the extent
5 practicable, coordinate with State governments and
6 local stakeholders to ensure the equitable distribu-
7 tion of outreach to eligible rural communities.

8 (d) REQUIREMENTS OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—
9 A provider of technical assistance under the program shall
10 provide technical assistance to eligible rural communities
11 relating to disaster recovery—

12 (1) including assistance in—

13 (A) planning, and identifying issues, poten-
14 tial solutions, and sources of funding, with re-
15 spect to disaster recovery;

16 (B) preparing and submitting applications
17 with respect to assistance for disaster recovery
18 to Federal agencies, such as the Economic De-
19 velopment Administration, the Federal Emer-
20 gency Management Agency, and the rural devel-
21 opment mission area, and State agencies;

22 (C) addressing denials of applications de-
23 scribed in subparagraph (B); and

1 (D) implementing funding received for dis-
2 aster recovery from Federal agencies and State
3 agencies described in subparagraph (B); and

4 (2) which may involve—

5 (A) telecommunications;

6 (B) water infrastructure;

7 (C) housing;

8 (D) energy infrastructure;

9 (E) community facilities;

10 (F) business infrastructure; and

11 (G) local government infrastructure.

12 (e) DURATION.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible rural community
14 may receive technical assistance under the program
15 during the 3-year period beginning on the date on
16 which a disaster is declared for the area within
17 which all or part of the eligible rural community lies.

18 (2) EXTENSION.—The Secretary may extend
19 the period of eligibility described in paragraph (1)
20 for an additional 3-year period with respect to an el-
21 igible rural community on a case-by-case basis.

22 (f) MULTIPLE RECIPIENTS.—More than 1 eligible
23 rural community all or part of which are within an area
24 covered by a disaster may receive technical assistance
25 under the program.

1 (g) FUNDING.—

2 (1) PROVISION.—As soon as practicable after
3 the date on which a disaster is declared for the area
4 within which all or part of an eligible rural commu-
5 nity lies, the Secretary shall make available to the
6 applicable State office of the rural development mis-
7 sion area amounts available to carry out this section,
8 without any requirement for the submission of an
9 application by such State office.

10 (2) ALLOCATION.—The Secretary shall allocate
11 amounts made available to carry out this section for
12 each fiscal year to eligible rural communities in ac-
13 cordance with a formula established by the Secretary
14 that is based on the population of individuals af-
15 fected by a disaster, as determined using data from
16 the most recent decennial census.

17 (h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
18 authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary to carry
19 out this section \$50,000,000 for each fiscal year.