



## ***The “Rural Recovery Act”***

**U.S. Senator Peter Welch**

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### **Background:**

After a natural disaster, the first step to recovery is identifying damage, planning, and applying for assistance. However, rural town governments often lack the experience or employees to carry out this work and deal with the dozens of federal agencies that are involved in the recovery process.

The *Rural Recovery Act* would provide funding via state U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development (RD) offices for technical assistance to bolster capacity in rural towns after major natural disasters.

### **Legislation:**

The *Rural Recovery Act* would create a program at USDA RD to provide RD state offices with funding to administer emergency recovery technical assistance after presidential-declared disasters take place in their jurisdiction.

Specifically:

- The RD state offices would receive this funding automatically without submitting applications.
- The RD state office could choose to administer the funding or contract out.
- The funding formula would be based on population.
- Funding would be available for three years after the disaster occurs, but the Secretary of Agriculture would have the option to extend availability for another three years on a case-by-case basis.
- TA providers would be able to assist with any federal agency, including EDA, FEMA, and RD. The TA providers could assist on applications to benefit any type of disaster impacted infrastructure.
- The Secretary of Agriculture could alter the definition of rural for this program at their discretion. In the bill, the definition of rural is set at any area with fewer than 20,000 people.
- The bill includes an annual authorization of \$50 million in appropriations.