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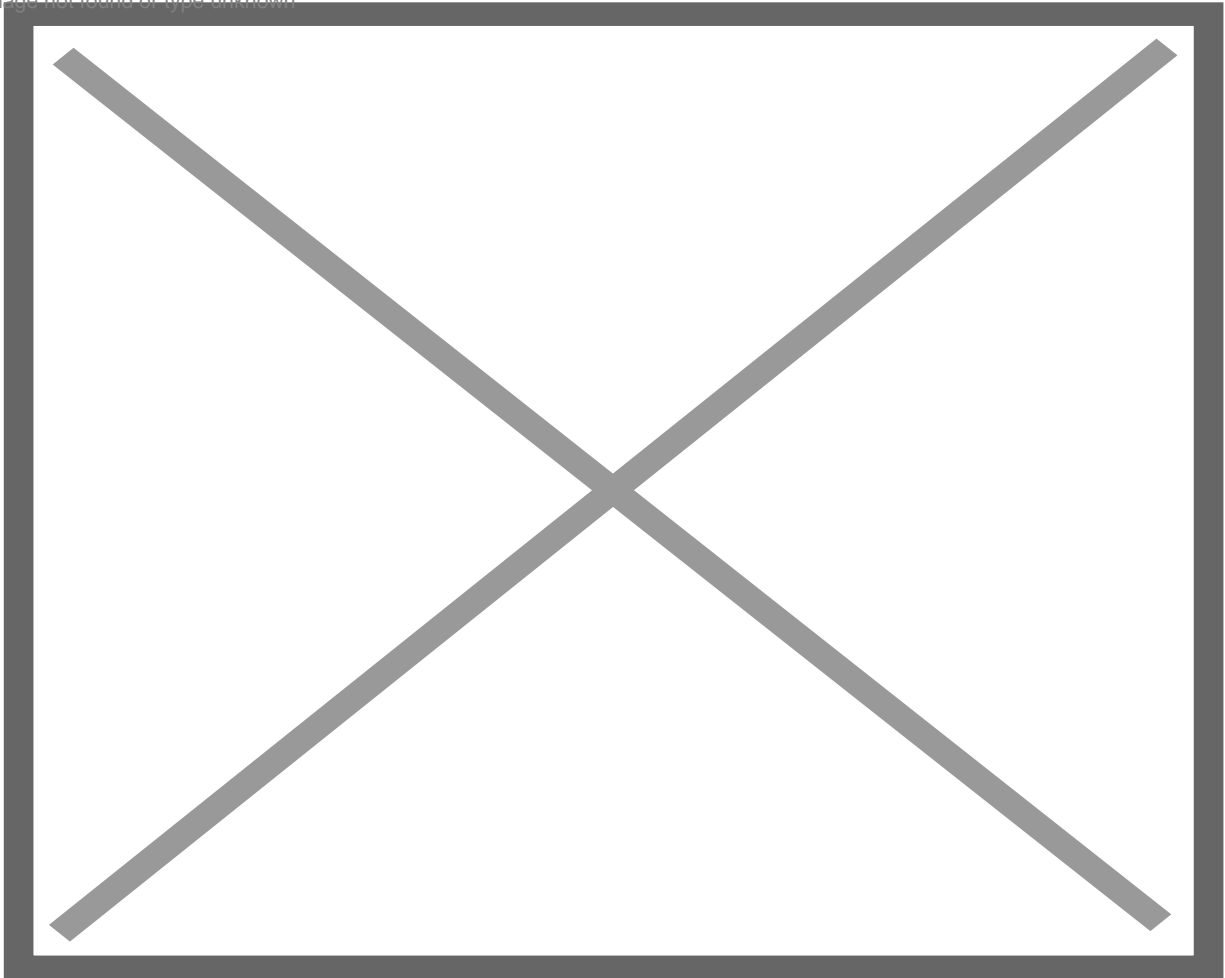
Plaskett, Graves, Reintroduce Legislation To Expedite Initial FEMA Funding Post-Disaster Declaration

Plaskett and Graves Lead Charge for Faster Federal Aid

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Home in St. John after the passage of Hurricane Irma on Sept. 6. 2017. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

A resuscitated Expediting Disaster Recovery Act is back before the U.S. House of Representatives, thanks to efforts by V.I. Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett as well as Representative Garrett Graves of Louisiana.

The measure, which [passed the House](#) with bipartisan support during the 117th Congress, would create a separate funding stream so that the Federal Emergency Management Agency can allocate key assistance within 30 days of the declaration of a major disaster.

“After the experiences of Hurricanes Irma and Maria, it was abundantly clear that our territory and the other disaster-impacted areas need the support of the federal government to rebuild lives, businesses, and communities as quickly as possible,” Congresswoman Plaskett said in a statement about the proposed legislation. “This bill cuts out some of the unnecessary federal process to put a minimum amount of long-term recovery funding on the ground in the immediate aftermath of a major disaster, without taking away oversight of taxpayer dollars.”

The federal disaster response, she argued, should “match the urgency that victims feel after having their lives turned upside down.” Under the draft bill, FEMA would be able to disburse at least 10 percent of the estimated total amount of grants “for permanent repairs, restoration and replacement of damaged facilities in the immediate aftermath of disaster.”

The measure would also explicitly allow assistance provided to individuals and household to be used for making homes habitable during long-term disaster recovery efforts. The use of direct assistance for permanent or semi-permanent housing would also be allowable under the bill, if it is a cost-effective alternative to other solutions.

“The foundation of this legislation is built on tough lessons learned from communities that are, unfortunately, experts in disaster response and recovery,” said Representative Graves (R-LA), the bill’s co-author. Both Louisiana and the US Virgin Islands have been undergoing protracted recovery efforts, slowly rebuilding after hits from multiple devastating hurricanes in years past.

H.R 5774, as it was numbered in the previously constituted Congress, passed with overwhelming bipartisan support (406-20 in favor) when it was voted on in September 2022. Representatives Plaskett and Graves are optimistic that the re-introduced measure, now H.R. 6084, will receive similar robust support from both sides of the aisle. “Getting this bill signed into law is a national priority,” said Mr. Graves.