

The Virgin Islands Consortium

U.S. House Unveils \$81 Billion Disaster Aid Bill

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The U.S. House of Representatives, led by Republicans, on Monday introduced an \$81 billion disaster aid bill aimed at helping states and U.S. territories damaged by storms during the 2017 hurricane season, as well as the wild fires that have affected the West Coast.

The measure, introduced by the chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations, Rodney Frelinghuysen, doubles in amount the [largely panned White House bill](#) that called for \$44 billion, which both Republicans and Democrats decried as grossly inadequate. The latest bill includes \$27.6 billion for the Federal Emergency Management Agency and \$26.1 billion for community development block grants, Mr. Frelinghuysen said in a statement.

The bill includes funding for Florida, Texas, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, as well as states ravaged by wildfires. It also includes funding for highway rebuilding, education programs, military construction and small business loans.

GOP lawmakers plan to approve the measure either as standalone bill, or as part of this week's stopgap funding aimed at keeping the government from running out of cash. If approved, the bill would bring to total the amount of funds spent on disaster relief by the federal government this year to \$132.75 billion, according to [Politico](#).

Funding includes:

- \$26.1 billion for Community Development Block Grants
- \$12.1 billion for the Army Corps of Engineers
- \$3.8 billion for the Department of Agriculture
- \$2.9 billion for hurricane education recovery
- \$1.5 billion to repair Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Reserve, National Guard, Coast Guard, and medical military facilities
- \$1.4 billion to address all current damage to federal highways caused by designated disasters

Texas alone has asked for \$61 billion; Puerto Rico for \$94.4 billion and the U.S. Virgin Islands for \$7.5 billion. The latest measure could well win approval from the White House, as lawmakers in states damaged by the storms have vowed to oppose the stopgap government funding bill if the disaster aid measure is not approved.