

118TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 2917

To amend the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act to establish an emergency preparedness and response technical assistance program to assist entities that operate rural water or wastewater systems in preparing for and responding to natural or man-made disasters.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 26 (legislative day, SEPTEMBER 22), 2023

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO (for herself and Mrs. HYDE-SMITH) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

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## A BILL

To amend the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act to establish an emergency preparedness and response technical assistance program to assist entities that operate rural water or wastewater systems in preparing for and responding to natural or man-made disasters.

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 Water System  
5 Disaster Preparedness and Assistance Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE**  
2 **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.**

3 Section 306(a) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural  
4 Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1926(a)) is amended by add-  
5 ing at the end the following:

6 “(27) EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RE-  
7 SPONSE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.—

8 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall  
9 establish an emergency preparedness and re-  
10 sponse technical assistance program to provide  
11 grants to eligible entities to assist associations  
12 described in paragraph (1) that operate rural  
13 water or wastewater systems in preparing for  
14 and responding to natural or man-made disas-  
15 ters, as determined by the Secretary.

16 “(B) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—An entity eligi-  
17 ble to receive a grant under subparagraph (A)  
18 is a nonprofit organization that—

19 “(i) has demonstrated experience pro-  
20 viding emergency technical assistance for  
21 disaster preparation, recovery, and re-  
22 sponse activities to water and wastewater  
23 utilities nationwide; and

24 “(ii) has the capacity to deploy per-  
25 sonnel that possess—

1                   “(I) an active water or waste-  
2                   water system operators’ license; or

3                   “(II) knowledge of water and  
4                   wastewater utilities necessary to carry  
5                   out activities described in subpara-  
6                   graph (C).

7                   “(C) ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES.—An eligible  
8                   entity that receives a grant under subparagraph  
9                   (A) shall use the grant—

10                   “(i) to provide on-site personnel and  
11                   equipment to assist with water and waste-  
12                   water systems in the event of a disaster;

13                   “(ii) to coordinate with statewide  
14                   emergency response networks to assist with  
15                   water and wastewater systems;

16                   “(iii) to facilitate the development of  
17                   disaster action plans between associations  
18                   described in subparagraph (A), units of  
19                   local government, the Federal Emergency  
20                   Management Agency, and State emergency  
21                   management agencies;

22                   “(iv) to improve resiliency and mitiga-  
23                   tion planning with respect to water or  
24                   wastewater systems;

1 “(v) to provide geographic information  
2 system mapping of water and wastewater  
3 systems;

4 “(vi) to prepare or update predisaster  
5 vulnerability assessments, emergency re-  
6 sponse plans, communication protocols, or  
7 hazard recognition and evaluation skills  
8 with respect to water and wastewater sys-  
9 tems;

10 “(vii) to conduct preliminary damage  
11 assessments of critical infrastructure in the  
12 event of a disaster;

13 “(viii) to provide emergency services  
14 with respect to water and wastewater sys-  
15 tems to restore service in the event of a  
16 disaster, including—

17 “(I) pump and motor evaluation  
18 and repair;

19 “(II) water disinfection and  
20 flushing;

21 “(III) leak detection;

22 “(IV) line repair;

23 “(V) water main and valve loca-  
24 tion;

1 “(VI) emergency power genera-  
2 tion;

3 “(VII) bypass pumping;

4 “(VIII) water treatment; and

5 “(IX) maintaining safety meas-  
6 ures;

7 “(ix) to address outstanding defi-  
8 ciencies focused on resolving health-based  
9 regulatory, operational, financial, and man-  
10 agerial deficiencies that impact the sus-  
11 tainability of water and wastewater sys-  
12 tems;

13 “(x) to assist with application and re-  
14 porting requirements for Federal and State  
15 agencies, including the Federal Emergency  
16 Management Agency and insurance recov-  
17 ery claims, with respect to water and  
18 wastewater systems; and

19 “(xi) to provide for disaster prepara-  
20 tion, support, and response activities tar-  
21 geted to disadvantaged communities that  
22 lack the financial resources and human  
23 capital necessary to adequately address  
24 significant health, safety, or sanitary con-

1                   cerns with respect to the water and waste-  
2                   water systems of those communities.

3                   “(D) USE OF FUNDS.—

4                   “ (i) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity  
5                   that receives a grant under subparagraph  
6                   (A) may use the grant for salaries, sup-  
7                   plies, and expenses relating to the activities  
8                   described in subparagraph (C).

9                   “ (ii) LIMITATION.—Not more than 25  
10                  percent of the amount of a grant under  
11                  subparagraph (A) may be used to purchase  
12                  or reimburse the rental costs of appro-  
13                  priate emergency equipment, as determined  
14                  by the Secretary.

15                 “(E) RESTRICTION.—An eligible entity  
16                 that receives a grant under subparagraph (A)  
17                 may not use the grant funds to pay for eligible  
18                 activities for which the eligible entity receives  
19                 other Federal funds.

20                 “(F) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIA-  
21                 TIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated  
22                 to carry out this paragraph \$20,000,000 for  
23                 each of fiscal years 2024 through 2028.”.

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