



## Gainesville 2020 Federal Agenda

### **Smart Cities and Communities**

The House and Senate continue to focus on ways in which the Federal government can encourage the development of smart cities technologies and standards. There are many different goals that define Smart Cities. These include: enhancing the efficiency of services, sustainability, mobility by all modes, safety & security, and economic growth.

The Smart Cities and Communities Act of 2019 (H.R. 2636 and S. 1398) has been introduced in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress to promote smart technologies and systems to improve community livability, services, communication, safety, mobility energy productivity, and resilience to natural and manmade disasters, to reduce costs, traffic congestion, and air pollution, and to promote economic growth and opportunities for communities of all sizes. A focus of the legislation is on data security and privacy, demonstrating the value and utility of smart, local government-owned and operated services, and the development of a workforce skilled in smart city and community technologies.

Of note, the legislation would create two grant programs within the Department of Commerce. The first is a smart city technology demonstration program to help cities demonstrate the value of implementing these technologies. The second is for a TechHire Workforce Training and Development Pilot Program to develop training protocols for workers who will be needed to create and deploy these technologies. The legislation emphasizes the need for partnerships with local community colleges and universities.

Given the City's focus and investments in these technologies, the Federal agenda calls for *support* of comprehensive smart cities and technologies legislation.

### **Job Training Programs**

The Department of Labor was forced to close the Gainesville Job Corps Center in the Fall of 2017 due to the incursion of contaminated soil onto the property and into the buildings. The Department in September 2019 notified the City of its plan to deactivate the Gainesville program.

The Mayor, Commissioner Ward, and the City Manager have met with the Department of Labor over the past 18 months to discuss options to return Job Corps to Gainesville or to create an alternative job training program for the community and surrounding area.

Senator Rubio included a provision in a Labor Appropriations Bill last September stating that, "The Committee is aware of the Department's proposed deactivation of the Gainesville Job Corps Center, which has been inactive since September 2017, due to damage it sustained during Hurricane Irma. The Committee is concerned that the proposed closure will significantly reduce training opportunities to disadvantaged youth in Florida and encourages the Department to ensure the Job Corps centers in Florida retain robust capacity."



By way of background, Gainesville was one of the 131 Job Corps Centers across the country run by the Department of Labor. Job Corps is the nation's largest residential education and job training program for at-risk youth ages 16 through 24, serving over 50,000 youth nationwide each year. The Department of Labor is conducting a comprehensive assessment of all centers to determine the cost of maintaining a physical facility and may lead to suspensions or closures of centers.

**Support** efforts to return Job Corps services to Gainesville and to cleanup and repurpose the existing Job Corps property.

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA):** The House Education and Labor Committee has indicated an interest in reauthorization of WIOA for the first time in six years. The last bill, in 2014, called for the first overhaul in Federal workforce training programs in more than 15 years.

The legislation provides direction for a wide variety of Federal job training programs including Job Corps, apprenticeships, one-stop career source centers, technical education, vocational rehabilitation, and STEM education programs.

**Monitor** the development of WIOA legislation to support local job training needs and partnerships and to provide direction to the U.S. Department about the future of the Gainesville Job Corps Center.

## **Infrastructure and Transportation**

**Infrastructure:** The focus on a bipartisan infrastructure package at the beginning of the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress has faded, and attention is now on enacting legislation in the Second Session of Congress to reauthorize Federal Highway and Transit programs. The current "Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act" or "FAST Act" was enacted in December 2015 and is set to expire on September 30, 2020. This legislation sets the formulas under which Federal gas tax revenue is distributed to the states for maintenance and construction of Federal highways and other high priority corridors. The legislation also provides annual operating support and capital grant funding for transit agencies, including RTS.

It is estimated that the FAST Act will provide more than \$305 billion in Federal funding for highway and transit programs over the five-year life of the program.

While there is broad bipartisan support for these transportation programs, there is no agreement on how to pay for the legislation. With a reduction in gasoline usage, the current gas tax cannot keep pace with current funding for these programs. Discussion is underway on efforts to raise the gas tax or to create another funding mechanism, such as a "vehicle miles fee." Currently, Federal gas tax revenue is deposited into the Federal Highway Trust Fund. To supplement gas tax revenue, Congress has transferred more than \$140 billion in general revenue into Federal highway and transit programs over the past 10 years.

Without action by Congress next year to reauthorize and recapitalize Federal transportation programs and the Trust Fund, states could see a 40 percent cut in Federal highway funding and public transit agencies face even more dramatic cuts in operational and capital grant programs.

**Support** enactment of legislation to reauthorize Federal highway and transit programs before the September 30, 2020 deadline.

**Vision Zero:** H.R. 4819, the Vision Zero Act of 2019, would authorize states to award grants from their federal apportionment to cities to develop a Vision Zero plan to eliminate transportation-related fatalities



and serious injuries. It would support local innovation in traffic safety by offering grants to local governments that establish aggressive policies to end traffic fatalities in their jurisdictions; direct funding to develop inter-agency plans that connect the engineering of streets, with traffic enforcement and public education safety, improve implementation success, and create continuity for residents; and fund the implementation of safety innovations and gather best practices through a competitive grant program. Grant recipients must have both a Vision Zero policy and plan in place and must document and report back to Congress and the US DOT best practices and lessons learned for dissemination to other cities and communities.

It is unlikely that the House will take up this legislation. The more likely scenario is that committee will consider it for inclusion in the comprehensive reauthorization of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act.

**Support** enactment of the Vision Zero Act or its inclusion in the comprehensive highway authorization bill.

**Complete Streets:** Complete streets is a transportation policy and design approach that requires streets to be planned, designed, operated, and maintained to enable safe, convenient and comfortable travel and access for users of all ages and abilities regardless of their mode of transportation.

S.2077 and H.R. 3663, The Complete Streets Act, would establish a national complete streets program. This legislation would require states to set aside Federal funding for Complete Streets projects, create statewide programs to award funding (and provide technical support), and adopt design standards that support safer, complete streets. States would be required to set aside five percent of their Federal highway allocation to create a "Complete Streets" program. Eligible entities would need to adopt a Complete Streets policy, participate in technical assistance, and create a prioritized plan for Complete Streets projects in their jurisdictions to access the funding. Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) would be responsible for certifying that Complete Streets policies meet minimum requirements set out by the United States Secretary of Transportation. The U.S. Secretary of Transportation, States, and MPOs would be required to adopt design standards for Federal surface transportation projects that provide for the safe and adequate accommodation of all users of the surface transportation network, including motorized and non-motorized users, in all phases of project planning, development, and operation.

As with the Vision Zero Act, it is unlikely that the Senate or House will take up this legislation. The more likely scenario is that committee will consider it for inclusion in the comprehensive reauthorization of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act.

**Support** enactment of the Complete Streets Act or its inclusion in the comprehensive highway authorization bill.

**Broadband Access:** Congress remains very engaged on the issue of broadband access, especially for rural and underserved communities. Many in Congress view broadband access as crucial to maintaining the economic viability of rural America and there is significant funding available through existing programs with more likely to be made available. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has authorized more than \$121 million in funding over the next decade to expand broadband to 36,579 unserved rural homes and businesses in 16 states. Funds will come from the Connect America Fund Phase II auction and more funding will be made available. On August 1, the FCC unanimously voted to create the "Rural Digital Opportunity Fund" which will distribute \$20.4 billion in Universal Service Fund subsidies for rural broadband over the next decade. Funds can go to cable broadband providers as well as telecoms. The FCC is also in the process of conducting several spectrum auctions, most notably, of the



“c-band.” It has been estimated that a c-band spectrum auction could generate more than \$60 billion in revenue, of which a sizeable portion could go to funding rural broadband development.

In addition to the FCC programs, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) through its ReConnect and grants programs has more than \$700 million in annual broadband funding with substantial additional funds provided in the FY2018 appropriations bill to supplement the annual funding. There are also smaller programs at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and other agencies that target more specific issues related to broadband buildout.

Congress and various agencies are committed to making substantial funds available for broadband access and while there will continue to be multiple opportunities for broadband funding over the coming years, there are almost always specific requirements for entities that apply.

**Monitor** opportunities for Federal partnerships to expand broadband access for Gainesville residents.

**Broadband mapping:** FCC chair Ajit Pai has acknowledged the need for better tools to collect data about broadband deployment and to improve the current Form 477 reporting process. Members of both parties in Congress have raised concerns about the inaccuracy of the FCC’s broadband maps. FCC broadband mapping is crucial in determining which communities are eligible for build out funding and to help Congress and the FCC better understand where they should direct funding. Under its current methodology, the FCC found that 25 million people are not using the internet at broadband speeds. Microsoft, by comparison, puts the number at closer to 163 million people.

In a 2019 House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Communications hearing on the issue, Chairman of the full Committee, Frank Pallone (D-NJ) stated, “Without good maps, we cannot correctly determine how we should target funding for broadband access and adoption in rural and urban areas. Without good maps, we don’t have enough detail to assess competition or review mergers.”

There are currently five bills before the House Energy and Commerce Committee that would address the issue while the Senate Commerce Committee has unanimously passed the Broadband Deployment Accuracy and Technological Availability (DATA) Act, a bill that would improve the data government uses to establish broadband availability maps.

The Broadband Florida Initiative [2009 SB 2626 (Fla. Stat. §364.0135)] authorizes the Florida Department of Management Services to apply for grants and lead broadband planning and development efforts in Florida. The Department used the funds from Federal grants to establish the Broadband Florida Initiative. The initiative leads collaborative efforts in broadband capacity building across local, regional, and state public and private institutions. The Broadband Florida Initiative includes a grant development team and an E-rate program team. The E-rate team provides direct support to eligible community anchor institutions so that Florida can best leverage available funding opportunities. The initiative also created the now defunct Florida Broadband Joint Work Group, which produced the Florida’s Broadband Strategy White Paper in June 2009. The Broadband Florida Initiative also created the Florida Broadband Mapping Project. The Florida Broadband Mapping project was mapping landline and wireless services using information from providers and other sources. The collected and verified broadband mapping information supported the broadband development objectives identified in Fla. Stat. §364.0135.

**Support** legislation to provide more accurate mapping of broadband deployment and gaps in service.

**Autonomous Vehicles:** The City of Gainesville has been working on the deployment of an autonomous shuttle system to link downtown to the University of Florida campus. The U.S. Department of



Transportation, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, has slowed progress on the project through regulatory delays in approving the operational use of the vehicles.

Congress continues to examine ways in which to encourage innovation in public transit programs. At the same time the Administration continues to slow the deployment of new technologies. The 116<sup>th</sup> Congress will continue its oversight of regulatory issues that impact innovation in the transportation sector.

**Support** legislation and Congressional oversight of Federal transportation policy to encourage, instead of impeding, the deployment of autonomous systems and vehicles

## **General Government**

**Census:** The upcoming 2020 census will be the first with an option to complete a Census questionnaire online. Households will be able to respond to the 2020 Census online, over the phone, or through a paper questionnaire. If households do not respond in any of those three ways, a census taker will visit to obtain the information.

The concept of “usual residence” was established in the Census Act of 1790 and has been the main principle in determining where people should be counted, and this concept has been followed in all subsequent census counts. “Usual residence” has been defined as the place where a person lives and sleeps most of the time and can include a college dormitory or off-campus residence. This is not necessarily the same as the person's voting residence or legal residence.

For the 2020 Census as it pertains to students, they are supposed to be counted where they live and sleep the majority of the year as of Census Day, April 1, 2020. They should not use legal residences or where they are registered to vote but where they actually live (whether it is on or off campus). This is consistent with guidelines for previous Census counts.

**Monitor:** Census policies and procedures for conducting the 2020 Census.

**5G wireless services:** 5G services uses higher-frequency wavelengths transmitted through a network of “small cell” devices – roughly the size of a backpack – scattered throughout communities. To build 5G networks, telecommunications providers place small cells on public rights-of-way to construct their own communications networks. Analysts expect the full buildout of the 5G network will require nearly one million small cell installations over the next decade. As stewards of substantial amounts of public rights-of-way, cities and counties are concerned with recent Federal actions that undermine the ability of local governments to serve as trustees of public property, safety and well-being.

Under Chairman Pai, the FCC is pursuing a comprehensive strategy to Facilitate America's Superiority in 5G Technology (the 5G FAST Plan). The Chairman's strategy includes three key components: (1) pushing more spectrum into the marketplace; (2) updating infrastructure policy; and (3) modernizing outdated regulations. There is a significant push by Congress, industry and the administration to deploy 5G as quickly as possible so that the US does not fall behind China and other countries. The current administration, through the FCC, has taken steps to help industry aggressively deploy 5G. The FCC adopted new rules that will reduce Federal regulatory impediments to deploying infrastructure needed for 5G and help to expand the reach of 5G for faster, more reliable wireless service. It has also reformed rules designed decades ago to accommodate small cells. The reforms include mandated decision schedules for cities and counties as they make decisions to approve or disapprove small-cell siting applications.





While some in Congress believe that the FCC overstepped its authority with the Order, no action has been taken to overturn its order.

**Monitor** FCC and Congressional actions that may impact the City’s decisions related the deployment of 5G wireless equipment.

**Net Neutrality:** The FCC on December 14, 2017 voted to change its previous Net Neutrality rules that prevented Internet service providers (ISPs) from blocking or slowing down traffic to websites. The rules also kept ISPs from charging users’ higher rates for faster access to certain websites or charging websites to be automatically included in any sort of “fast lane.” In its order the FCC also tried to make it harder for anyone else to regulate ISPs in a similar way. Despite significant news coverage, public interest and political interest, Congress has not acted to address the FCC’s net neutrality changes. As the National Association of Counties said in its court filing: “Whether or not the net retains neutrality significantly affects American businesses, government, education and schools, researchers, health services providers and hospitals, social media, and e-commerce. Without net neutrality regulations, broadband companies can charge certain users more and block or slow access to some websites while favoring others. Broadband providers will be able to utilize paid prioritization and unreasonable discrimination rather than treating all internet traffic equally. The loss of net neutrality requirements could have huge repercussions for local governments that must provide information to citizens, are mandated to have high speed secure connections for sensitive data being transmitted from our clerks, treasurers, assessors and during elections – as now internet service providers can require additional fees or throttle speeds below our county’s mandatory compliance levels.”

The House approved the Save the Internet Act last April. The legislation would prohibit blocking and throttling web traffic and would categorize broadband as a service open to heavy regulation. Proponents of the legislation say it is necessary to prevent companies from blocking or slowing the delivery of content such as videos. Opponents say it would strap broadband providers with burdensome restrictions and could lead to price controls. The Senate has yet to take up the measure.

**Monitor** any Congressional action to roll back the FCC decision on net neutrality.

## **Affordable Housing and Homelessness**

**Moving to Work (MTW) Expansion:** In a 2016 appropriations bill, Congress mandated that HUD expand the Moving to Work (MTW) demonstration program by 100 public housing authorities (PHAs). This is a demonstration program that provides housing authorities with the opportunity to design and test innovative, locally designed strategies that use Federal dollars more efficiently, help residents find employment and become self-sufficient, and increase housing choices for low-income families. MTW allows PHAs exemptions from many existing public housing and voucher rules and provides funding flexibility with how they use their Federal funds. PHAs in the MTW demonstration have pioneered a number of innovative policy interventions that have been proven to be successful at the local level, and subsequently rolled out to the rest of the country’s PHAs. Currently, there are 39 MTW PHAs nationwide (one in Florida – Orlando) and HUD plans to expand the program to an additional 100 PHAs by 2022.

**Monitor:** HUD soon will request applications from Public Housing Authorities to participate in the Moving to Work program.

**Homelessness:** The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act created several programs within the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that focused on combating the root causes of homelessness. The McKinney-Vento Act has been amended many times, most recently in 2009, when



President Obama signed the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act, which updated and expanded the definition of homelessness and made changes to existing programs under McKinney-Vento. Under the HEARTH Act, three previously separate HUD homeless assistance programs, the Supportive Housing Program (SHP), Shelter Plus Care program (S+C), and Single Room Occupancy (SRO) program, were grouped under the single umbrella of the Continuum of Care (CoC) program.

The CoC program provides formula and competitive grant funding to local governments and non-profits. It requires communities seeking funds to develop a Continuum of Care system designed to address the problem of homelessness through a coordinated community-based process of identifying needs and building a system to address them. The approach is predicated on the understanding that homelessness is not caused merely by a lack of shelter, but involves a variety of underlying, unmet needs, including physical, economic, and social.

Under the CoC program, the SHP program provides assistance to help the homeless transition from their current state to a more stable living situation. The goals of the program are to provide assistance to help the homeless achieve residential stability and foster independence through programs that increase their skill and/or income levels.

The S+C program provides rental assistance that, when combined with social services, provides supportive housing for homeless people with disabilities and their families. The program allows for a variety of housing choices, such as group homes or individual units, coupled with a range of supportive services.

The SRO was created to expand suitable residential opportunities for homeless individuals. This has been accomplished through compensating owners of eligible SRO residences, for a period of 10 years, for improvements made to kitchen and bathroom facilities in eligible SRO residences, as well as providing rental assistance for the residents that occupy those units.

Under the HEARTH Act, HUD also added 12 new eligible activities for funding under the CoC program, which include the following: housing search mediation or outreach to property owners; credit repair; provision of security or utility deposits; rental assistance for a final month at a location; assistance with moving costs; and/or other activities that help homeless individuals move immediately into housing or would benefit individuals who have moved into permanent housing in the last 6 months. In addition, the HEARTH Act requires established CoC's to rank their projects for funding into two categories: Tier I new or renewal projects, which are most likely to receive funding; and Tier II new or renewal projects, whose funding is dependent on the resources still available and the strength of the CoC's application.

*Support* continued adequate annual funding for Department of Housing and Urban Development Homeless Assistance Grants, particularly for the Continuum of Care Program.

## **Public Safety Programs**

**Public Safety and Emergency Response:** Federal grant funding for many Department of Justice (DOJ) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) programs are provided as block grants with each state receiving a certain amount of funding, generally linked to population. That funding is then passed through to local jurisdictions to help support police, fire, emergency management, and homeland security functions of government. Examples of these formula programs include the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) and the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG).



Funding from Federal programs is also made available to local governments via competitive grant solicitations. Specifically, program funds can be used to hire police officers through Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) or firefighters through Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response Grants (SAFER), purchase equipment through the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) and support safety projects through the Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S) grants.

**Support** continued funding for FEMA’s Assistance to Firefighters Grants, Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grants, Fire Prevention and Safety Grants and the Department of Justice’s Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grants. **Support** any City of Gainesville applications for these funds. **Support** legislation and administrative policies that will assist the City in ensuring public safety.

**Firearm Safety and Background Checks:** The House has passed three bills in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress related to firearm safety and expanded background checks. These are:

H.R. 8, The Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019, would make nearly all intrastate, private-party firearms transactions subject to the recordkeeping and NICS background check requirements of the Gun Control Act of 1968 (GCA). For the past two decades, individuals have been able to transfer firearms intrastate among themselves without being subject to the licensing, recordkeeping, and background check requirements of the GCA. This includes the “gun show loophole.”

H.R. 1112, The Enhanced Background Checks Act of 2019, would lengthen the amount of time firearms transactions could be delayed pending a completed NICS background check from three business days under current law to several weeks.

H.R. 1585, The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2019, included provisions that would expand Federal firearms ineligibility provisions related to domestic violence to include former dating partners under court-ordered restraints or protective orders and persons convicted of misdemeanor stalking offenses.

The House Judiciary Committee approved and sent to the full House two additional bills that deal with the issue of “Red Flag” laws. Seventeen states, including Florida, and the District of Columbia have passed some version of “Red Flag” laws that allow concerned persons, including family members in some cases, to petition a court to file an extreme risk protection order against an individual that would allow for the suspension of that individual’s firearms eligibility under certain circumstances. H.R. 1236, the Extreme Risk Protection Order Act, would make subjects of such protective orders ineligible to receive or possess firearms under Federal law in any state and would establish grant programs to encourage states to adopt such laws.

The Committee also approved and sent to the House H.R. 2708, The Disarm Hate Act, which make persons convicted of a misdemeanor hate crime ineligible to receive or possess a firearm or ammunition.

## **Economic Development**

**Economic Development Administration:** The Trump Administration has proposed eliminating the Economic Development Administration (EDA). The EDA is primarily a granting agency that funds economic development projects throughout the country in partnership with local governments or non-profits. Funding from the EDA is used to support private investment and generally funds projects such as infrastructure improvements that help reinvigorate areas and lead to additional reinvestment in homes and businesses. EDA grant funding could assist the City in future redevelopment efforts.





The House has recommended funding of \$540,000,000 for EDA in Fiscal Year 2020, while the Senate recommends \$319,500,000. The President requested \$29,950,000.

In addition to the annual funding appropriated for EDA, Congress also appropriates supplemental funding to EDA for projects in communities that have been impacted by Presidentially declared natural disasters. Congress appropriated \$600,000,000 in Fiscal Year 2018 and another \$600,000,000 in Fiscal Year 2019 to support projects in these areas of the country.

**Support** continued funding of the Economic Development Administration and any City of Gainesville applications for funds.

**Opportunity Zones:** The Opportunity Zone program was created in the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act to encourage the flow of private capital into distressed communities by attracting investment through tax advantages to investors in Qualified Opportunity Funds. The tax incentives to encourage investments are (1) deferral of tax on capital gains that are reinvested in a qualified opportunity fund, and (2) no tax on the capital gains from investments in these funds, if the investment in the fund is held for at least 10 years.

Through regulations proposed by the Department of Treasury, investors can take advantage of the tax breaks in several ways. First, investors can qualify if the projects they fund focus on exported goods or services or the domestic market outside the zone. Long-vacant properties will immediately qualify for the tax breaks. Investors will be allowed to share their stakes in funds that invest in the zones as long as the money is reinvested in another qualifying business or asset. Real estate investors will be allowed to lease and refinance their properties.

The Administration is considering proposals to adjust the boundaries for Opportunity Zones to reflect the 2020 Census. Also, under consideration are proposals to enhance benefits to Opportunity Zones in areas designated as Superfund for Brownfield sites. Some communities are asking Treasury to allow states to add to their list of designated Opportunity Zones.

Investors contributing to Qualified Opportunity Funds by December 31, 2019 and held for seven years, will not pay tax on 15 percent of their deferred capital gains. For investments made between January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2021, investors will not pay taxes on 10 percent of their deferred capital gains

Congress is closely monitoring the Opportunity Zone program. Hearings are being scheduled to increase oversight and transparency of the program and qualified projects. House and Senate members also are planning legislation to require funds that invest in opportunity zones to file annual reports with the Department of Treasury that disclose details of their development projects and any new businesses.

**Monitor** the continued roll out of the Opportunity Zone program and any developments that may be of help to the City's designated zones.

## **Disaster Response and Recovery**

**Disaster Relief Reform Act:** Congress enacted the Disaster Reform Recovery Act (DRRA) last year to provide a greater emphasis on investment in mitigation before a disaster. The legislation focuses on funding public infrastructure projects that increase community resilience before a disaster occurs. Previously, funding for pre-disaster mitigation grants relied on Congressional appropriations which varied from year to year. The goal of DRRA is to provide communities with sufficient funding to be able to plan and execute mitigation programs to reduce disaster risk nationwide.



While the legislation would increase FEMA's annual pre-disaster allocation from about \$50 million to between \$300 million and \$500 million, Acting FEMA Administrator Pete Gaynor has indicated FEMA will need more funding and that states and municipalities must play a greater role in responding to catastrophes. As such, in a draft report, FEMA has suggested that municipalities will need to be able to pay more in terms of disaster mitigation and will need to be “self-sustaining” to an extent.

**Monitor** the implementation of the Disaster Relief and Reform Act and any other changes to the program that are proposed to the Administration.

**CDBG-DR:** HUD’s Community Development Block Grant Disaster Relief program provides grants to states and localities to assist with recovery efforts following a Presidentially declared disaster. Generally, grantees must use at least half of these funds for activities that principally benefit low- and moderate-income persons or areas. The program is designed to help communities and neighborhoods that otherwise might not recover due to limited resources.

Funding for this program is subject to Congressional appropriations. In the first session of the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, Congress provided HUD with \$2.4 billion in CDBG-DR funding to aid disaster-affected communities with long-term recovery, including the restoration of housing, infrastructure, and economic activity. This follows the provision of \$37 billion for CDBG-DR in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress.

While CDBG-DR funding has played a significant role in funding recovery efforts from past disasters, and continues to play a major role in recovery efforts, the program is not formally authorized by Congress, meaning that the rules that govern the funding use and oversight vary with HUD guidance accompanying each allocation. Members of Congress have expressed an interest in formally authorizing the CDBG-DR program, largely in response to concerns about HUD’s oversight of CDBG-DR funding. The House Financial Services Committee approved and sent to the House legislation in July (H.R. 3702, the Reforming Disaster Recovery Act of 2019) to authorize the CDBG-DR program and included a number of provisions to codify financial controls over program funds. A goal is to allow HUD to release these disaster recovery funds more quickly and efficiently to impacted states and communities with greater clarity about their use.

**Support** the enactment of legislation to allow HUD to award CDBG-DR funding more quickly and to provide greater clarity to eligible communities.

