



# Overview of DRCA Congressional Affairs Strategy

## Draft 11.11.2024

### **Objective:**

To strategically support senior members of Congressional Committees who have authority/oversight over FEMA and other federal agencies, who align with the Disaster Recovery Coalition of America's mission through targeted political fundraisers, testimony, policy development and technical assistance. This support aims to build and maintain relationships that will influence policy and legislative decisions favoring disaster recovery, preparedness, and infrastructure resilience.

### **Identify Key Issues:**

DRCA believes FEMA and other federal agencies, should offer more federally supported, state/locally managed disaster programs. To that end, DRCA will focus on improving disaster housing programs (advocating for FEMA to bring back a federally supported, state managed post-disaster housing program), improving FEMA's procurement/contracting process, equitable recovery and resilience building, and innovation and technology integration. DRCA plans to lean into how other Federal departments and agencies manage contracting, what their plans are to implement equitable strategies, how they coordinate with FEMA (or not), and the tech/innovation strides made. Here are the issues we intend to focus on in our work with Congress.

#### **1. Disaster Housing:**

- **Expand Disaster Housing Assistance:** Advocate for the expansion of federally supported, state and locally managed disaster housing programs. Highlight the need for a range of flexible options, including temporary housing units, direct lease programs, and repair and renovation assistance for existing structures. Emphasize that these programs should be tailored to meet the unique needs of different communities, including rural, urban, and tribal areas.
- **Introduce a Federally Supported, State Managed Disaster Housing Program:** Work with FEMA and Congress to introduce a new housing program which will be created utilizing lessons learned from the STEP program. DRCA has developed a white paper for this program using the working name, "Housing Equitable Living Program" (HELP). HELP includes key improvements such as increased funding, streamlined application processes, and better coordination with local governments. Emphasize that this program should be designed to provide faster, more efficient temporary housing solutions in the aftermath of disasters.
- **Permanent Housing Solutions:** Propose that FEMA develop strategies not only for temporary housing but also for transitioning disaster survivors into permanent housing. This could include partnerships with HUD and other agencies to create pathways for long-term recovery.

## 2. FEMA's Procurement and Contracting Management:

- **Improve Transparency and Accountability:** Advocate for greater transparency and accountability in FEMA's procurement and contracting processes. Suggest the establishment of clearer guidelines, improved oversight mechanisms, and regular audits to ensure that contracts are awarded and executed fairly and efficiently.
- **Best Practices from Other Agencies:** Propose a comprehensive analysis of procurement and contracting practices across other federal agencies, such as the Department of Defense or the Department of Transportation. The goal would be to identify best practices that could be adopted by FEMA to enhance its contracting procedures.
- **Expedite Contracting During Emergencies:** Advocate for the development of a rapid contracting mechanism within FEMA that allows for quicker engagement with contractors during disaster response. This could involve pre-approved contracts or frameworks that can be activated immediately after a disaster, reducing delays in critical recovery efforts.

## 3. Equitable Recovery and Resilience Building:

- **Address Disparities in Recovery:** Emphasize the need to address disparities in disaster recovery efforts, ensuring that marginalized and vulnerable populations receive equitable support. Advocate for FEMA to incorporate equity considerations into all aspects of disaster response, from housing to contracting.
- **Build Long-Term Resilience:** Recommend that FEMA and Congress focus on not just recovery but also resilience-building efforts. This could include investments in infrastructure improvements, community preparedness programs, and initiatives that strengthen the capacity of local governments to manage future disasters.

## 4. Streamline Federal-State-Local Coordination:

- **Improve Interagency Collaboration:** Propose initiatives that would enhance coordination between FEMA, other federal agencies, state governments, and local authorities. This could include establishing clearer lines of communication, joint training exercises, and integrated response frameworks.
- **Simplify Grant Processes:** Advocate for the simplification of federal grant processes related to disaster recovery, making it easier for state and local governments to access and utilize funds. This could involve reducing administrative burdens and increasing flexibility in the use of funds.

## 5. Innovation and Technology Integration:

- **Leverage Technology for Disaster Response:** Encourage FEMA to adopt innovative technologies that can improve disaster response and recovery efforts. This could include the use of data analytics for better decision-making, GIS mapping for resource allocation, and mobile applications for real-time communication with affected communities.
- **Invest in Research and Development:** Advocate for increased investment in research and development related to disaster management. This could involve partnerships with universities, research institutions, and private sector companies to develop new tools and techniques for disaster response.

These additions can help create a comprehensive strategy that addresses immediate concerns while also laying the groundwork for long-term improvements in disaster recovery and resilience.

## Key Components of the Strategy:

### 1. Develop a Fundraising Calendar:

- **November:**
  - **Post-Election Strategy Meeting:** Convene with key members and their staff to discuss the outcomes of the midterm elections and plan for upcoming legislative sessions. Use this opportunity to reinforce the Coalition's commitment to supporting disaster recovery initiatives.
  - **Follow-up Donations:** Provide additional financial support to members who have emerged as champions for disaster recovery and infrastructure resilience, based on their demonstrated commitment and influence.

### 2. Identify a Short List of Priority Members on Key Committees to Work with on Key Issues

- We will be reaching out to the Board Members for feedback on developing a list of 10 members of Congress DRCA should focus on developing relationships with moving forward. Special focus will be placed on members who have significant influence and share some of DRCA's goals & priorities, serve on an influential committee and/or represent disaster-prone areas.
- We believe it would be wise to wait until after the election before finalizing this list, but we also wanted to share some of the suggestions we have already received from members.

### 3. Engage with Members and Their Staff:

- **Ongoing Communication:** Maintain regular communication with the offices of key members. Provide them with policy briefs, data, and resources that underscore the importance of disaster recovery and infrastructure resilience.
- **Staff Briefings:** Organize briefings for legislative staff to educate them on the Coalition's priorities and the potential impact of upcoming legislation on disaster preparedness and recovery efforts.

### 4. Coordinate with Other Stakeholders:

- **Partnerships:** Partner with other organizations and coalitions that share similar goals to amplify the impact of fundraisers and show a united front on disaster recovery and infrastructure issues.
- **Joint Fundraising Events:** Consider co-hosting fundraising events with aligned organizations to pool resources and increase influence.

### 5. Leverage Media and Public Relations:

- **Media Coverage:** Ensure that the Coalition's support for key members is highlighted in the media, particularly in local outlets within the members' districts. This can help increase the visibility of their work on disaster recovery and infrastructure resilience.
- **Public Endorsements:** Consider issuing public endorsements or statements of support for key members who have demonstrated strong leadership on disaster recovery issues.

### 6. Monitor Legislative Developments:

- **Track Legislation:** Closely monitor legislative developments related to disaster recovery and infrastructure. Use this information to tailor fundraising messages and to identify new opportunities to support key members.
- **Responsive Fundraising:** Be prepared to organize additional fundraisers or provide financial support in response to critical legislative moments, such as the introduction of key bills or committee votes.

### 7. Evaluate and Adjust Strategy:

- **Quarterly Review:** Conduct quarterly reviews of the strategy's effectiveness. Assess the impact of financial contributions on members' engagement with disaster recovery issues and adjust the strategy as needed.



- **Feedback Loop:** Maintain a feedback loop with key members and their staff to ensure that the Coalition's support is meeting their needs and to identify new opportunities for collaboration.

## 8. **Conclusion:**

This congressional affairs strategy aims to build and strengthen relationships with key members of the U.S. House of Representatives Transportation and Infrastructure Committee through targeted financial support. By aligning fundraising efforts with the Coalition's mission, the strategy seeks to influence policy decisions that enhance disaster recovery, preparedness, and infrastructure resilience. The success of this strategy will depend on timely and strategic engagement, ongoing communication, and the ability to adapt to the evolving political landscape.

## Background & Supporting Data

STATE	NUMBER OF DECLARED DISASTERS
CA	34
TN	28
OK	27
MS	24
IA	23
AK	21
KY, SD, VT	20
AL, AR, WA, WV	19
LA, NH, NY	18
TX	17

COUNTY	NUMBER OF DECLARED DISASTERS
Johnson County, KY	15
Floyd County, KY	14
Washington County, VT	14
Lawrence County, KY	14
Magoffin County, KY	14
Knott County, KY	13
Clay County, KY	13
Lee County, KY	13
Owsley County, KY	13
Lafourche Parish, LA	12

NOTE: The below goes back to 2011 and all of the data excludes COVID

COUNTY	TOTAL FEMA FUNDS SINCE 2011	CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS
New York County, NY	\$9B	NY-10 (Dan Goldman), NY-12 (Jerry Nadler), NY-13 (Adriano Espaillat)
Nassau County, NY	\$1.9B	NY-3 (Thomas Suozzi), NY-4 (Anthony D'Esposito)
Calcasieu Parish, LA	\$1.2B	LA-3 (Clay Higgins), LA-4 (Mike Johnson)
Harris County, TX	\$1.2B	TX-2 (Dan Crenshaw), TX-7 (Lizzie Fletcher), TX-8 (Morgan Luttrell), TX-9 (Al Green), TX-18 (Vacant), TX-29 (Sylvia Garcia), TX-36 (Brian Babin), TX-38 (Wesley Hunt)
Queens County, NY	\$1.1B	NY-3 (Thomas Suozzi), NY-5 (Gregory Meeks), NY-6 (Grace Meng), NY-7 (Nydia Velázquez), NY-14 (Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez)
Bay County, FL	\$933M	FL-2 (Neal Dunn)
Greene County, NY	\$552.1M	NY-19 (Marc Molinaro)
Lee County, FL	\$479.1M	FL-17 (Greg Steube), FL-19 (Byron Donalds)
Miami-Dade County, FL	\$448.7M	FL-24 (Frederica Wilson), FL-26 (Mario Diaz-Balart), FL-27 (Maria Salazar), FL-28 (Carlos Gimenez)
Jefferson Davis Parish	\$378.8M	LA-3 (Clay Higgins)



# House Transportation & Infrastructure (T&I) Sub Committee On Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management

## **Current Members**

### **Republicans**

*Scott Perry (PA), Chairman*

*Garret Graves (LA)*

*Jenniffer González-Colón (PR)*

*Lori Chavez-DeRemer (OR), Vice Chair*

*Anthony D’Esposito (NY)*

*Derrick Van Orden (WI)*

*Mike Ezell (MS)*

*Celeste Maloy (UT)*

*Sam Graves (MO) (ex officio)*

### **Democrats**

*Dina Titus (NV), Ranking Member*

*Eleanor Holmes Norton (DC)*

*Sharice Davids (KS)*

*Troy A. Carter (LA)*

*Grace F. Napolitano (CA)*

*John Garamendi (CA)*

*Jared Huffman (CA)*

*Rick Larsen (WA) (ex officio)*