

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**



FROM: Supervisor John J. Benoit

SUBMITTAL DATE:
September 12, 2012

SUBJECT: Support H.R. 5870 (Schiff), the Disaster Declaration Improvement Act.

RECOMMENDED MOTION: Move that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Support H.R. 5870 (Schiff); and
2. Authorize the Chairman of the Board to forward a letter of support to the Honorable Congressman Schiff, in Washington D.C.

BACKGROUND: H.R. 5870 (Schiff) would make changes to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) current disaster declaration process. Small and medium sized communities located in large states like California have a particularly difficult time reaching the state-wide and county-wide thresholds needed to qualify for federal disaster relief. This legislation would direct FEMA to take into account the ability of small and medium sized communities in large counties and in large states to recover from natural disasters.

Congressman Schiff in a public statement is quoted that, "After the windstorms last year, communities across southern California were unable to access essential federal disaster relief merely because they are in a large county or state. Natural disasters strike communities indiscriminately, but federal law need not be so capricious. We need to reform the process so that small and medium sized cities in a more populous state like California are not penalized when it comes to disaster aid." As an example, Pasadena and Glendale were unable receive federal disaster relief under the current threshold criteria.

The bill would direct FEMA to take into account more than just the county-wide per capita threshold in evaluating a governor's request under the "localized impacts" factor in the federal regulations. FEMA would consider the damage suffered by communities with less than 25,000 people located in counties with at least one million people in states with at least five million people. This legislation would make it easier for FEMA to award disaster relief under the expanded "localized impacts" criteria for a small number of communities that fail to receive federal disaster relief if they do not meet that state-wide and county-wide damage threshold levels because the calculation of these thresholds on a per capita basis punishes these communities for being located in large counties in large states.



John J. Benoit
Fourth District Supervisor