



Disaster Relief Act

Understanding the 2019 Additional Supplemental Appropriations for the Disaster Relief Act



The \$19 billion 2019 Additional Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Act (the Relief Act) was signed into law on June 6, 2019, providing funding to “several federal departments and agencies for expenses related to the consequences of recent wildfires, hurricanes, volcanos, earthquakes, typhoons, and other natural disasters”¹ in 2018 and 2019.

The Relief Act is one of the largest disaster aid appropriations ever passed into law. Nonetheless, the ability of recovering communities to realize its benefits now largely turns on the ability of (1) federal agencies to expedite the disbursement of funding through existing or new programs, and (2) state and local governments to position themselves to apply for and create Action Plans to administer awarded monies.

The following is a summary of those appropriations from the Relief Act that will require an efficient and targeted interplay among federal, state, and local governmental entities in order for disaster aid to begin aiding communities in need.



U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

USDA is by far the federal agency receiving the largest appropriation from the Relief Act. In all, over **\$6.7 billion** in disaster aid will be disbursed through various USDA affiliated programs for losses in 2018 and 2019 due to major disasters nationwide, including Hurricanes Michael and Florence, western wildfires, Hawaii volcanic activity, and Midwest flooding.

Specifically, just over **\$3 billion** is available through 2020 for disbursement as block grants and other forms of assistance among impacted states and territories for

expenses related to uninsured crop, forest and orchard, and poultry and livestock losses. Another **\$480 million** for “emergency forest restoration” and **\$558 million** for “emergency conservation” efforts will be available for relevant state agencies to pursue as well as **\$435 million** for technical and financial assistance that local governments can pursue to relieve imminent threats to life and property watersheds posed by floods, fires, windstorms, and other natural disasters.

Additionally, **\$150 million** is available to state, local, tribal, and certain nonprofit entities through USDA’s Rural Community Facilities Program as grants and loans for repairing, rebuilding, or building new rural community health care, education, public safety, and public service facilities. Further, USDA will be furnishing rules by which another **\$720 million** will be available for urgent wildland fire suppression operations and **\$12 million** for ongoing state and private forestry recovery efforts.

Finally, **\$625.2 million** in federal Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) will be available to income qualifying households in Puerto Rico (\$600 million) and the Northern Mariana Islands (\$25.2 million) based on anticipated new federal rules and the submittal of action plans by these jurisdictions by which to dispense this assistance.

¹<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/2157/summary/00>



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE)

USACE is appropriated over **\$3.2 billion** for a variety of disaster recovery and resilience-related new construction and repairs. These efforts will involve varying degrees of state and local government coordination and funding in planning and construction, along with full state or local responsibility for long-term operation and maintenance costs.

Project investments include: **\$740 million** to construct flood, storm, and shore damage projects; **\$575 million** to repair damages to ACOE projects caused by natural disasters along the Mississippi River and its tributaries; **\$980 million** for dredging federal navigation projects in response to natural disaster damages; and **\$1 billion** for expenses to prepare for flood, hurricane, and other natural disasters and support emergency operations, repairs, and other activities.



U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

HUD is receiving over **\$2.4 billion** to be granted as community development block grants (CDBG-DR) for disaster relief, long-term recovery, restoration of infrastructure and housing, economic revitalization, and mitigation in the most impacted and distressed areas resulting from a **major disaster that occurred in 2018 or 2019**.

HUD must now determine the amount each eligible state, territorial, local, and tribal government is entitled to receive based on their respective levels of housing and infrastructure damage. Moreover, HUD must fully allocate these funds within six months from enactment of the Relief Act.

As HUD drafts award calculations and rules to be applied to these monies, eligible recipients should begin preparing to submit Action Plans, which essentially serve as applications for receiving their respective shares. Among other elements, Action Plans should set forth general program aims to address unmet recovery needs among distressed populations, in addition to demonstrating financial controls and processes to assure that procurement and the expenditure of funds meet program aims and applicable regulations.



Noteworthy congressional direction to HUD on infrastructure recovery and mitigation funding

Up to \$431 million of this amount “shall be allocated to meet unmet infrastructure needs for grantees that received allocations for disasters that occurred in 2017, including Florida, Puerto Rico, Texas, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Grantees affected by Hurricane Maria are entitled to \$331.4 million of this latter total. HUD has yet to provide its definition of “infrastructure.”

Congress requires within 90 days from enactment, HUD will issue rules by which eligible state, territorial, and local recipients can apply for and use their respective portions of \$15.9 billion in CDBG-DR—an amount the law appropriated for mitigation projects in February 2018.



Federal highway administration

The law appropriated **\$1.65 billion** to FHWA for its Emergency Relief Program, which provides state departments of transportation with fast-track funding to repair roads and bridges damaged by the disasters covered in the Relief Act.



U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA)

EDA is receiving \$600 million to be awarded among eligible state, county, local, tribal, and special district governments, in addition to certain nonprofits and public and private institutions of higher education, “for necessary expenses related to flood mitigation, disaster relief, long-term recovery, and restoration of infrastructure.” As with the other appropriations being funneled through federal agencies for local use, eligible recipients should begin now to draft Action Plans that form the basis of their funding applications.



Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Congress directed another **\$476.7 million** to FEMA for necessary expenses related to the consequences of Hurricanes Michael, Florence, and Lane, Tropical Storm Gordon, and Typhoon Mangkhut. These funds will remain available for use by jurisdictions impacted by those events until September 30, 2023.



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

EPA is conferred \$349.4 million to be spent as “State and Tribal Assistance Grants,” including **\$57.5 million** as hazardous waste financial assistance grants related to impacts from Hurricanes Florence and Michael and Typhoon Yutu; **\$53.3 million** for capitalization grants for the Clean Water State Revolving Funds under the Federal Water Pollution Control Act; and **\$296,100,000** for capitalization grants under the Safe Drinking Water Act, specifically for eligible local projects intended to reduce flood or fire damage risk and vulnerability or to enhance resiliency at treatment works.



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

HHS is appropriated **\$311 million** for the “Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund” to remain available through September 30, 2020 among impacted areas covered by the Relief Act. This funding includes **\$80 million** in aid available to state and local governments and other eligible institutions for renovations, construction, equipment, and other capital improvement costs necessary to meet the healthcare needs of those impacted areas, along with at least **\$100 million** for behavioral health treatment, treatment of substance use disorders, crisis counseling, and other programs to provide support to individuals impacted by a covered disaster or emergency. Additionally, **\$30 million** is available through September 30, 2021 for costs of renovating, repairing, or rebuilding child care facilities; **\$55 million** for Head Start programs, and **\$25 million** for payments to States, territories, and tribes authorized under the HHS Community Services Block Grant Program.





U.S. Department of Education

The law appropriated **\$165 million** for “Hurricane Education Recovery,” which addresses necessary expenses related to meeting the educational needs of individuals affected by disasters covered by the Relief Act.

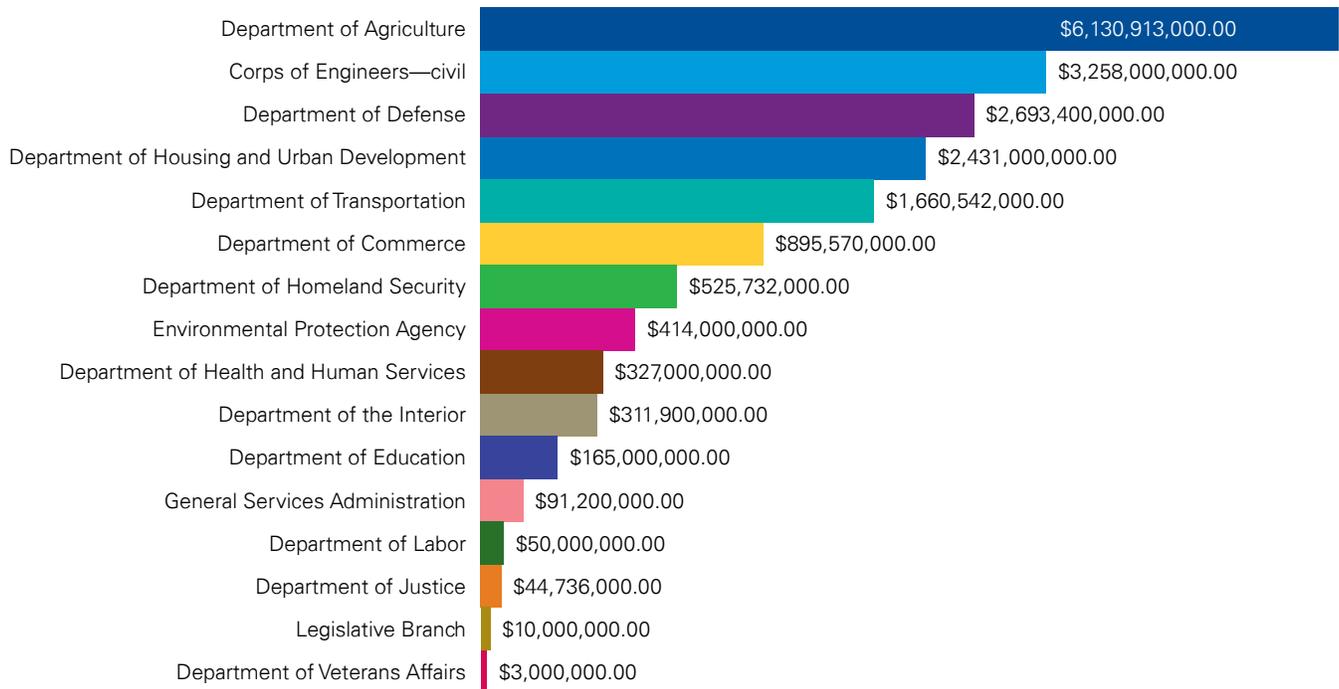


National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

The Relief Act directs **\$150 million** to NOAA for “Fishery Disaster Assistance” for states demonstrating commercial fishery failures and fishery resource disasters as a direct result of disasters covered by the Act. Awarded grants cover up to 75 percent of the cost to assess and address economic and social effects of the commercial fishery failure, including funding fishery restoration projects and financial assistance and job training for fishermen.

Total appropriations by agency:

\$19,027,843,000.00



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