

Bill to reauthorize National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program introduced in Senate

September 6, 2017

On September 6, Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) introduced a bill (S.1768) to permanently reauthorize the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP). First authorized in 1977, NEHRP has led to significant improvements in earthquake research and infrastructure preparedness. The program's most recent authorization expired in 2009.

Since its initial authorization, NEHRP has helped communities prepare for and protect against earthquakes. The project coordinates earthquake hazard risk reduction efforts at federal, state, and local levels. Four federal agencies oversee NEHRP: The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and National Science Foundation (NSF). The program also works extensively with state and industry experts on program implementation.

New and updated provisions to the bill will allow for better hazard management and emergency response. The bill calls for the creation of a set of maps showing active faults and folds, liquefaction risk, landslide risk, and susceptibility to seismically induced hazards. Another new requirement of the bill is a comprehensive report of the risks that earthquakes pose nationwide and the efficacy of risk reduction programs. The bill also calls for the continued development of the Advanced National Seismic System (ANSS), including the Earthquake Early Warning (EEW) system, which was flagged for elimination in the President's fiscal year (FY) 2018 budget request.

S.1768 is cosponsored by Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Cory Gardner (R-CO), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), and Maria Cantwell (D-WA). The bill is supported by multiple professional societies, such as the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), Association of American State Geologists (AASG), Geological Society of America (GSA), and Seismological Society of America (SSA).

Sources: Library of Congress, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Senate
