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On August 3, Representative Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA-48) introduced the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP) Reauthorization Act of 2018 (H.R. 6650). First established by Congress in 1977, NEHRP is a program that provides coordination and leadership in monitoring seismic activity, studying impacts, and improving earthquake resilience in communities nationwide. Four Federal agencies run the program— the National Institute on Standards and Technology (NIST), the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The bill reauthorizes the program for five years, updates the responsibilities of the organizing agencies, and orders the creation of reports and management plans for the program.

In May, the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee held a field hearing in California on earthquake mitigation and the reauthorization of NEHRP. Citing the USGS, Representative Rohrabacher stated that there is a 99 percent chance of a 6.7 magnitude earthquake or larger occurring in California in the next 30 years. He also noted that, while the program's federal funding and operation has continued, the program's authorization technically expired in 2009.

The introduction of this bill comes almost one year after Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) introduced the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program Reauthorization Act of 2017 (S. 1768). The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation amended the bill, and it awaits passage by the full chamber. The principal differences between the House and Senate versions are variations in the levels of funding authorization in a five-year period.

Sources: Library of Congress; U.S. House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology; U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.
