

House advances disaster aid funding bill

January 16, 2019

On January 16, the House passed the Supplemental Appropriations Act (H.R. 268) to provide over \$12 billion in emergency funding for communities affected by earthquakes, wildfires, and other natural disasters in 2018.

The bill includes amendments that would more than double the initially proposed disaster relief funding for farmers whose property sustained damages and would increase funding for forest management.

H.R. 268 includes funding for the Army Corps of Engineers, an agency whose funding may be in jeopardy as President Donald Trump considers diverting its funds for a border wall on the US-Mexico border by declaring a national emergency.

The future of this bill is uncertain as Republicans have repeatedly stressed the futility of moving forward any appropriations bill that does not include funding for the president's border wall. Senator Richard Burr (R-NC) bluntly expressed that, regarding a wall-free bill, "the president won't sign it. Why would we work on it?" Democrats, on the other hand, believe that the wall is a frivolous expense and are refusing to accept any measure that includes funding for it.

The bill, which was introduced on day twenty-six of the partial government shutdown, includes a measure to reopen the government until February 8. It was passed in the House by a vote of 237-187, with six Republicans voting in favor of the measure. President Trump was expected to veto the bill, thus continuing the deadlock between Democrats and Republicans over ending the government shutdown. Ultimately, this bill did not make it to a vote in the Senate as a short-term spending deal was agreed upon to temporarily re-open the government on January 25.

Sources: E&E News; The Hill; Library of Congress; The Washington Post.
