

# U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Senators Baldwin, Hoeven Call on FEMA to Distribute Funds to Inland States for Climate-Resilient Infrastructure

Posted on Thursday, Sep 15, 2022

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

*WASHINGTON D.C.* – Today, U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Senator John Hoeven (R-ND) called on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to improve the funding distribution from the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program for non-coastal states for climate-resilient infrastructure. In the program’s first two years of funding, coastal states often had an unfair advantage over inland ones in the application cycle, resulting in the lack of resiliency funding for inland states.

“Wisconsin communities have been hit hard by repeated storms, flooding and severe weather events, and I’ve seen firsthand how these storms have washed out roads and damaged our highways and bridges, threatening Wisconsin’s ability to get to work, to get their goods to market and to keep our economy moving forward. As the climate crisis brings more extreme weather, I’m working to ensure our communities are given a fair chance at receiving the resources needed to protect themselves from future severe weather events like flooding,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “The distribution of funding from the BRIC program cannot leave non-coastal states like ours behind. Federal help for Wisconsin communities to build stronger and more climate resilient infrastructure is a top priority for me, and we need modifications to this program to ensure that the distribution of resources provides inland states the necessary tools to combat severe weather events with resilient infrastructure that is built to last.”

“ASFPM supports efforts to modify BRIC to not only recognize and reward state

floodplain management standards that go beyond NFIP minimums delivering more effective flood loss reduction than even the most modern building codes, but also to recognize that all states and territories have critical hazard mitigation priorities, increasing the state set-aside can bring more balance to the BRIC program and ensure that state priorities are being met. We applaud Senator Baldwin and Senator Hoeven's efforts to shed light on this issue," **said Chad Berginnis, Association of State Floodplain Managers Executive Director.**

Full text of the letter can be found below or [here](#).

Dear Administrator Criswell:

Thank you for your ongoing work to protect communities across the country from severe natural disasters. As your agency considers future rounds of funding for the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program, we ask that you consider modifications to the program so that all states, communities, and tribes—particularly inland communities—are able to compete for mitigation funds in order to take the steps needed to protect their communities from future severe weather events like flooding.

As part of the Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018 (DRRA), Congress provided significant resources to pre-disaster mitigation, recognizing the positive return on investment from mitigation activities.[1] To administer the funds, FEMA created BRIC to replace the Pre-disaster Mitigation (PDM) program. Although Congress did not prescribe priority changes in DRRA from the agency's previous mitigation efforts in the PDM program, FEMA created a new set of priorities to implement the BRIC.

We are concerned that the technical criteria put forth by FEMA has placed inland communities at a serious disadvantage for this program. Based on an evaluation of the awards, there appears to be a significant bias towards coastal over non-coastal states. In both rounds of funding, a significant majority of the number of projects and levels of funding have gone to coastal states rather than non-coastal ones. In the first round of funding, no competitive grants were awarded in FEMA Regions 5, 6, 7, or 8, and only one project in a non-coastal state was successful in receiving competitive funds.[2] In the second round, out of the 53 applications selected, there was only one successful application in FEMA Regions 5, 6, and 7. Further, over 65% of the money for projects in non-coastal states went to only one state, leaving the rest of non-coastal states to receive under 10% of the competitive funds.

While we strongly support the program's goals to strengthen the resiliency of states, territories, tribes, and communities, we are concerned that technical criteria will continue to take a narrow approach to recognizing resilience efforts and give preference towards communities with certain mitigation practices, particularly those within states, territories, and tribes that have adopted recent versions of the International Building Code (IBC) and the International Residential Code (IRC), while ignoring other categories like state floodplain management practices that go above federal minimums established in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), participation in the Community Rating System (CRS) or Firewise USA,[3] and other important aspects of comprehensive state mitigation programs.[4] For example, Wisconsin, along with 14 other states, earned FEMA's approval for an enhanced state mitigation plan, yet applicants within the state were not recognized for this work when applying for competitive BRIC grants.[5] Further, states with strong hazard mitigation offices, like Wisconsin, are also constantly working with sub-applicants to prevent subpar applications being filed to FEMA and ensure federal dollars are spent wisely on resiliency projects, as evidenced by effectively using PDM dollars in years past.

We remain concerned that future rounds of BRIC funding will continue to demonstrate a heavy bias toward projects in coastal states at the expense of non-coastal ones. To ensure more inland communities are able to take the mitigation measures necessary to protect themselves from future disasters, we urge you take appropriate steps to ensure a more equitable distribution of competitive grant funding to inland communities. As part of this change, we ask that you consider other mitigation practices, like land use practices, hazard-specific zoning practices, and enhanced statewide mitigation plans, to provide a more complete assessment of the efforts already taken by non-coastal states. Finally, we believe you should consider raising the state/territory and tribal set-aside allocations in BRIC in order to give states, territories, and tribes the resources they need to respond to the mitigation priorities of their local communities.

We ask you to consider modifications to the program and that you engage with non-coastal states and communities, hazard mitigation officials and organizations, and Members of Congress representing non-coastal states to ensure their voices are at the table during those considerations. We look forward to working with you to ensure communities across the country are prepared to meet the challenge of more frequent and severe natural disasters to come.

Sincerely,



An online version of this release is available [here](#).