

WASHINGTON, DC-The House of Representatives today gave its final stamp of approval to legislation originally authored by Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) and Congressman Doug Bereuter (R-Neb.) to reauthorize the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The legislation, S. 2238, "The Bunning-Bereuter-Blumenauer Flood Insurance Reform Act," addresses the excessive costs to NFIP of repeatedly flooded properties.

"This legislation is an important step for the livability of our communities and the health of our environment," Blumenauer said. "It will benefit federal taxpayers, local communities, flood insurance rate payers and our environment. I want to thank Ranking Member Barney Frank for his work in getting this legislation through the House and my friend and colleague Doug Bereuter for working on this issue with me for so many years. Approval of this legislation is a testament to the hard work by my colleagues in both chambers."

The National Flood Insurance Program expires this year and must be reauthorized by Congress. Blumenauer's bill will improve the effectiveness and stability of the NFIP by helping communities deal with repeatedly flooded properties. Under the legislation, FEMA will work with local governments to provide homeowners assistance in either elevating, flood-proofing, or moving their homes away from flood waters. Those who refuse mitigation assistance will pay higher flood insurance premiums for choosing to live in a risky area. FEMA estimates that most of the mitigation offers will involve elevation assistance. However, in cases where a buyout is the best option, the bill includes a generous purchase offer and contains an appeals process, as well as safeguards to ensure continued home-ownership.

The goal of the Blumenauer-Bereuter bill is to avoid injury, death and damage before it occurs, and to give property owners the option of moving to less hazardous areas. The bill will also save the federal government millions of dollars in avoided disaster relief payments for properties that are continually flooded. Finally, the legislation will benefit the environment, by encouraging non-structural approaches to flood control, such as removing structures from floodplains.

According to FEMA, existing mitigation and building standards have resulted in over \$1 billion annually in reduced flood losses. The Blumenauer-Bereuter bill will significantly increase these savings by increasing funding for FEMA's mitigation grant assistance program.

The United States Senate last week approved the identical legislation. The President is expected to sign the bill into law shortly.