

Sponsor: Imperial Irrigation District; Southern California Public Power Authority; Florida Municipal Electric Association; California Municipal Utilities Association; Orlando Utilities Commission

In Support of Reforming FEMA and Preserving the Federal Government’s Role in Disaster Response

1 Every year, communities throughout the United States experience events that cause significant damage to
2 utility infrastructure. These events can cause loss of life, human suffering, loss of income and property,
3 and electric infrastructure loss and damage, both from direct impact and from the often-extended periods
4 before electric service can be restored.

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6 Whether it be neighbors checking in on each other, or a line crew working through the night to restore
7 power, disaster response always begins as a local effort. However, the federal government plays a pivotal
8 role that saves lives and protects property, benefiting all involved. As part of that, the Federal Emergency
9 Management Agency (FEMA) plays a key role.

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11 FEMA helps state and local entities by coordinating federal response before, during, and after an event,
12 and by providing grants through its Public Assistance Program to help reimburse response and recovery
13 costs when state and local resources are overwhelmed. This assistance is critical for the recovery of
14 communities devastated by a disaster. But it also helps with response itself, knowing there is a federal
15 backstop in times of disaster allows state and local governments to focus on saving lives and protecting
16 property, including the timely restoration of power.

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18 However, all too often FEMA’s Public Assistance Program forces communities to navigate a maze of
19 complicated and inconsistent rules with mountains of burdensome paperwork. For example, to be
20 reimbursed for emergency power restoration work, FEMA can require utilities to provide exact GPS
21 coordinates for poles, crossarms, and pieces of equipment that is installed. Those data collection
22 requirements are time intensive and can be difficult to acquire in the immediate aftermath of a disaster
23 when reliable telecommunications service may not be available. More importantly, the requirements can
24 often delay the progress of utility crews, whose primary goal is to quickly and safely restore power. Even
25 after the data is collected and submitted to FEMA, utilities can face additional challenges. There are
26 multiple levels of review in the Public Assistance Program that can lead to delays of months, or even
27 years, before utilities are reimbursed for their emergency restoration work.

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29 H.R. 4669, the Fixing Emergency Management for Americans (FEMA) Act of 2025, would dramatically
30 alter the way long-term projects are funded; allow cities, towns, and counties to use their own, not federal,

31 procurement methods; and require FEMA to pay interest on loans to cover costs that will eventually be
32 recovered. The bill also includes a key provision that public power advocated for that would require
33 FEMA to expedite reimbursement payments for emergency work following a major disaster.

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35 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:** That the American Public Power Association (APPA)
36 continues to believe that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) plays an appropriate and
37 critical role in assisting communities that are overwhelmed in disaster; and

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39 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:** That APPA strongly supports H.R. 4669, the Fixing Emergency
40 Management for Americans Act of 2025, which includes much needed reforms that would clarify,
41 simplify, and reduce regulatory risk from the process of receiving public assistance. It would also free up
42 those on the ground to make the best use of FEMA's Public Assistance funds.

**Adopted at the Legislative & Resolutions Committee Meeting
February 24, 2026
Sunsets in March 2034**