



READI (REAL EMERGENCY ACCESS FOR AGING AND DISABILITY INCLUSION) IN DISASTER ACT

The Issue

In recent years, this nation has experienced several catastrophic natural disasters, from Category 4 and 5 hurricanes to devastating wildfires, floods, and earthquakes. Preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters requires a coordinated effort among federal, state, territorial, tribal, local, and non-governmental entities. It also requires recognition that, while individuals bear some responsibility to prepare for emergency situations, public entities, and recipients of federal funds must take into account the rights of people with disabilities in the implementation of their emergency management plans.

Too often, however, America's 61 million individuals with disabilities and 48 million older adults are overlooked in preparation for, management of, and recovery from natural and man-made disasters. During disasters, people with disabilities and older adults are two to four times more likely to be injured or die due to inadequate planning and lack of equal access to disaster programs and services. Many more are inappropriately institutionalized.

PVA's Position

PVA supports the READI in Disasters Act, which will soon be introduced by Sen. Robert Casey (D-PA). This legislation aims to respond to recent failures on the part of the nation's emergency management system to fully integrate people with disabilities into plans for responding to natural and man-made disasters. READI creates a network of centers focused on research, training, and technical assistance to help states and localities to better involve and support people with disabilities and older adults during times of disasters. It establishes a National Commission on Disability Rights and Disasters to study the needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and others with access and functional needs. It requires a review of the spending of disaster funds to ensure people with disabilities and older adults have access to services and that buildings and structures reconstructed following disasters are accessible. The bill also requires the Department of Justice to examine how civil rights of people with disabilities and older adults are treated during and following disasters.



The REAADI in Disasters Act has been endorsed by almost 100 state and national organizations. PVA urges members of the Senate to cosponsor this important legislation and work for its passage during this Congress. Any member interested in becoming a cosponsor should contact Josh Dubensky in Senator Casey's office at Josh_Dubensky@aging.senate.gov. Efforts are also underway to find a House sponsor for REAADI. Interested House members are encouraged to contact Senator Casey's office to discuss opportunities to engage with this legislation.