



Disaster Declaration Transparency Act

U.S. Senators Michael Bennet (D-Colo.) and John Hickenlooper (D-Colo.)

During the last year and a half, the Trump Administration [denied approximately 27 percent](#) of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) disaster declarations nationwide, a nearly 72 percent increase in the rate of denials compared to presidential administrations since 2001.

These denials came after FEMA documented that damage due to natural disasters met its fiscal threshold to warrant aid. The Administration has neither provided substantive concerns with nor justifications for their decisions to deny disaster aid, leaving disaster-affected communities paying the tab.

Last year, the Trump Administration denied Major Presidential Disaster Assistance for two disasters in Colorado – the Lee and Elk Fires in Rio Blanco County and major flooding in La Plata, Mineral, and Archuleta Counties. The Administration provided no justification for the denials, despite FEMA documenting over \$40 million in qualified damages and every member of the Congressional delegation supporting a disaster declaration.

Under current law, Congress has no authority to overturn a presidential disaster declaration denial and there is no requirement for the president to provide any justification for the decision.

The Disaster Declaration Transparency Act would:

- Require the president to submit to Congress a written explanation within twenty-four hours of denying a disaster request;
- Establish a fast-track, expedited process for Congress to overturn a denial through a joint resolution; and
- Ensure disaster decisions align with FEMA expertise and established precedent.

This bill would ensure there is a Congressional pathway for states to claim federal disaster funding when presidents ignore their responsibility to support them, which is particularly important as natural disasters become more frequent and severe in Colorado and across the country.