

AB 607 (Gloria)

Community Resiliency & Disaster Preparedness Act of 2017

Summary

AB 607 would establish several protections for low-income Californians in the case of a disaster.

Background

As averaged from 2013 to 2015, California had America's 17th-highest poverty rate, 15 percent, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. But, by a newer, more comprehensive Census accounting, California's true poverty rate is an eye-popping 20.6 percent—the highest in the nation. In California. According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), 12.8% of state residents experience hunger or food insecurity.¹

With so many Californians already experiencing economic insecurity and hunger, the resiliency of communities impacted by disaster is already compromised. Ensuring a strong the disaster response from government administered programs is especially important for low-income people and the communities they live in.² While the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is principally responsible for disaster response once a federal disaster has been declared, there is a great deal of work that must be accomplished to develop the request for a federal declaration and to be prepared to administer it with urgency immediately following the declaration. Even more common, a disaster doesn't raise to the level of a federal declaration

¹ [USDA Economic Research Service.
https://www.ers.usda.gov/media/8229/mapdata2015.xls](https://www.ers.usda.gov/media/8229/mapdata2015.xls)

² According to the National Center for Disaster Response, Community resilience is generally defined as the ability to adapt to, withstand, or rapidly recover from a disaster or catastrophic event. Research suggests that communities have a greater capacity to withstand a disaster when its population is not suffering from deprivation of basic needs. More information on NCDR's description of the relationship between vulnerability and disaster recovery, go to: <http://ncdp.columbia.edu/research/recovery-resiliency/>

for individual disaster assistance, but people in the community are still impacted. For low-income people, an economic shock caused by a disaster can still have disastrous consequences even when a Presidential declaration is not issued.

Current Law

The Federal Stafford Act provides the Secretary of Agriculture with the authority to operate a Disaster SNAP (D-SNAP)³ when affected areas have received a Presidential major disaster declaration for individual assistance (IA) and when commercial channels of food distribution are available (42 U.S.C. 5179).

USDA published the interim rule in 1981, at 46 FR 8922-01 (January 27, 1981) (amended in 1991 and 2005), which established the Department's authority to approve temporary emergency standards of eligibility for disaster victims without regard to Section 4(c) of the Act or the procedures set forth in the Administrative Procedure Act (5 U.S.C. 553).⁴ The Department published proposed final regulation for D-SNAP implementation as provided for in 7 Code of Federal Regulations Parts 272, 274, and 280. These final proposed regulations are expected to be finalized in the first half of the year.⁵

A state is not required to submit a request, but if it does and if the request is approved, a State's D-SNAP receives funding for 100 percent of disaster benefits and 50 percent of State & County

³ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster/disaster-snap-guidance>

⁴ USDA D-SNAP Handbook: https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/D-SNAP_handbook_0.pdf

⁵ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Proposed Final Regulations: FNS-2015-0021-0003. Found at: <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=FNS-2015-0021-0003>

administrative costs. Every \$5 in SNAP benefits provides \$9 in California economic activity, bringing essential resources into our communities during periods of intense need.⁶

Current state law provides for disaster assistance to be provided for CalWORKs recipients. There is no current state law relating to Disaster CalFresh (D-SNAP).

Purpose

AB 607 will protect against increased hunger and hardship of low-income families during a disaster by:

Codifying D-CalFresh in state law, and:

- Requiring the CalFresh program to maximize replacement benefit options during a disaster or power-outages.
- Requiring for additional budget resources to be triggered in the case of a disaster declared by the Governor to improve success of a federal request for disaster anti-hunger assistance and administration of the aid should it be granted (Requires 2/3rd vote).
- Improving State & County D-CalFresh outreach and operations based on learnings from prior disaster experiences, by requiring portable EBT issuance machines to be made available and for the computer systems to be programmed to accommodate remote application and issuance.

Clarify Rights of Disaster Victims in CalWORKs Program by:

- Establishing that being a victim of a disaster declared by the Governor or President would qualify someone for good cause from the CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work program.
- Waiving the requirement that someone should live in a county to apply for or

receive CalWORKs when the person has been temporarily relocated as a condition of a disaster.

- Requiring that County Human Services Agencies participate with Disaster Response teams to make sure that CalWORKs recipient households are aware of housing assistance through the program.

Support:

Sponsors

California Association of Food Banks
Western Center on Law and Poverty
Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank

Opposition:

None

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⁶ USDA Economic Research Service.
<https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/economic-linkages/>