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Baron Hill wants FEMA to change its formula for declaring disasters

By **DANIEL SUDDEATH**

Daniel.Suddeath@newsandtribune.com

November 30, 2009 10:48 pm

— CLARKSVILLE — Rep. Baron Hill detailed his disaster assistance reform bill Monday complete with a new wrinkle that could bring relief to Southern Indiana residents still reeling from the Aug. 4 flood damage.

If passed and signed by President Barack Obama, the legislation would entitle individuals in states impacted by natural disasters to apply for federal aid if a bordering state was awarded relief. For example, residents and businesses in Floyd and Clark counties could have accessed federal dollars for the Aug. 4 flood like their Kentucky counterparts if the legislation had been in effect.

Instead, Kentucky was ruled to have met the damage threshold and Indiana was denied, though local and state officials have argued counties such as Clark and Floyd experienced as much damage based on population as Louisville.

“There were a lot of residents that suffered, and the government suffered,” Clarksville Town Council President Greg Isgrigg said.

He joined Hill, a Democrat representing Indiana’s 9th District, during a press conference held in front of Cannon’s Florist, a 95-year-old Clarksville business that sustained about \$20,000 of damage from the Aug. 4 flood.

Hill said he will introduce the bill today, and it could include a previously unmentioned caveat of retroactive implementation. That could mean aid for Clark and Floyd residents and businesses that were twice denied by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

“We had this storm back in August, and over in Kentucky from the same storm, the business owners and the homeowners there are getting some grant relief to help them rebuild their houses, and rebuild their businesses,” Hill said. “We’re not getting any help, and that’s unfair.”

But while he expects the bill to pass, Hill acknowledged getting retroactive assistance will be difficult, as it will have to pass through committees as well as the full House before being sent to the Senate.

“We’ll see what happens,” he said.

Adding the retroactive stipulation would not create an exorbitant expense, in Hill’s opinion. His plan did receive the endorsement of Joe Wainscott, executive director for the Indiana Department of Homeland Security.

He said guidelines need to constantly be reviewed to ensure they are adequately protecting public safety as well as tax dollars.

“No legislation is perfect,” Wainscott said.

When declaring a state a disaster area, FEMA requires a statewide threshold of about 200 destroyed homes before it will suggest the president allocate federal funding. Hill said the criteria ignores residents that live in bordering communities of states that crossed the threshold. The Disaster Assistance Relief Act of 2009 calls for a ratio system to be used instead. Instead of a statewide assessment, FEMA would use a county-by-county approach.

According to Hill, the Aug. 4 storm impacted 26 homes for every 10,000 people in Louisville. Jefferson County had 1,918 homes damaged, with a population of 713,877.

Based on residents, Clark County incurred a greater strike with 29 homes impacted for every 10,000 people. Clark reported 316 damaged homes with a population of 106,673.

But since Indiana didn't have 200 destroyed homes, every Hoosier county that applied for aid was denied.

"It's an unfair situation that needs to be corrected," Hill said.

Deprived was how Cannon's Florist co-owners Angela Smith and her mother, Becky Wadsworth, felt following the FEMA denial.

The shop was relocated to 1026 N. Clark Blvd. about six years ago, and Smith said the downturn in the economy over the past two years has been hard enough to deal with.

Cannon's Florist took on more than 4 feet of standing water left after the Aug. 4 rains.

"We really thought that FEMA would come through for us," Smith said.

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[Be prepared to care for yourself, family during a disaster](#)

Posted: Friday, November 27, 2009 6:00 am | *Updated:* .

| 0 comments

The Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) advises all Hoosiers to take responsibility for their families and communities before a disaster strikes. Emergencies, both natural and man-made, are present in the lives of today's Hoosiers. Fires, H1N1 flu, severe weather and the resulting flooding pose a continuing threat to Hoosiers. It is not a matter of should you prepare, but how quickly can you be ready?

Hoosier citizens must join the effort of being prepared. Be prepared to care for yourself and your family during a disaster. "You cannot change an event such as severe weather, but you can change how you react to it and your level of personal capability," said IDHS Executive Director Joe Wainscott. "During a disaster, being able to take care of your own needs, for even a short time, will help public safety professionals devote resources to assist those who need them most."

During or immediately following a natural or manmade disaster federal, state, and local emergency management agencies will be working extremely hard to provide emergency relief, and promote public safety and wellbeing. During wide spread or severe emergencies, however, assistance from these agencies may not be immediately available due to the type of emergency or the number of persons affected.

The best way to prepare for any emergency is to [Get a kit](#). [Make a plan](#). [Be informed](#). [Get involved](#).

Get a kit: [Gather enough food, water, medicine and other supplies to sustain you and your household for at least three days, including your pets](#).

Make a plan: [Know what to do for different emergencies. Share and practice a plan with your family members](#).

Be informed: [Learn more about potential emergencies threatening the area where you live and appropriate ways to respond](#).

Get involved: [Once you and your family are prepared for emergency situations, go out and teach someone else about being prepared](#).

To find out more about what to do in an emergency, visit the [Indiana Department of Homeland Security Web site at www.in.gov/dhs](#) and click on "[Get Prepared](#)."

For breaking news and public advisories from IDHS, watch our [facebook page](#) or follow us on twitter at [twitter.com/IDHS](#).

Follow [twitter.com/INpublicSafety](#) for emergency alerts and public safety advisories including updates about the [H1N1 flu pandemic](#)

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PRACTICE FIRE SAFETY DURING THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Monday, 23 November 2009 08:33

As the Thanksgiving holiday approaches, Indiana State Fire Marshal Jim Greeson urges Hoosiers to be safe when preparing Thanksgiving dinner. According to the National Fire Protection Association, U.S. firefighters responded to roughly 1,300 home fires involving cooking equipment on Thanksgiving in 2007, roughly three times the daily average of cooking fires.

“The holiday season is a special time of year, and the last thing we want to see is the festivities ruined by a devastating fire,” Greeson said. “Nearly all firefighters have witnessed the heartbreaking way a fire can destroy a family’s holiday in a matter of just a few minutes. Following some simple, common-sense actions could make the difference between a memorable holiday season and a horrible nightmare.”

In recent years, deep fried turkeys have become a popular staple at the dinner table on Thanksgiving, but the preparation can be very dangerous. Last year, cooking was the leading cause of residential fires in the state of Indiana, resulting in 1,368 fires, 23 injuries, at least one death and more than half million dollars in property damage.

To ensure you and your family have a safe Thanksgiving holiday, State Fire Marshal Greeson offers the following safety tips:

- Turkey fryers should always be used outdoors a safe distance from buildings and any other material that can burn.
- Never use turkey fryers on wooden decks or in garages.
- Make sure the fryers are used on a flat surface to reduce accidental tipping.
- Never leave the fryer unattended.
- Make sure the turkey is completely thawed and be careful with marinades. Oil and water don’t mix, and water causes oil to spill over, causing a fire or even an explosion hazard.
- Keep an all-purpose fire extinguisher nearby. Never use water to extinguish a grease fire. If the fire increases, immediately call 9-1-1 for help.
- Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period, turn off the stove.
- If you are simmering, baking, roasting, or boiling food, check it regularly, remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that you are cooking.
- Keep anything that could catch fire (oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging, towels, curtains, etc.) away from your stovetop.
- Keep a lid nearby when you’re cooking to smother small grease fires. Smother the fire by sliding the lid over the pan and turn off the stovetop. Leave the pan covered until it is completely cooled.
- For an oven fire turn off the heat and keep the door closed.

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Thursday, December 10, 2009

[IDHS Hires New Building Code Compliance Officer](#)

November 18, 2009

by **[Indiana RealEstateRama](#)**

Category: [News](#) || [Housing & Development](#) | [No Comments](#)

INDIANAPOLIS, IN - November 18, 2009 - (RealEstateRama) — Scott Perez, an experienced architect, is Indiana's new building code compliance officer. He will oversee building construction and fire code enforcement, elevator and amusement ride inspections, review of construction plans and boiler and pressure vessel inspections for the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS).

He has a bachelor's and master's degree in architecture from the University of Illinois and a master's of business administration from Butler University. He graduated from Pike High School and is currently a resident of Indianapolis.

He also will coordinate enforcement efforts with all divisions of the Indiana Department of Homeland Security and other state agencies which include the State Department of Health, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Education and Family and Social Services Administration.

"We are pleased to have Scott join the team at IDHS," said Joe Wainscott, executive director of IDHS. "His experience and creativity will be a great asset to the building safety branch of IDHS."

"Scott has developed a strong professional relationship with the community that he has served," said Jim Greeson, State Fire Marshal and Fire & Building Safety Division Director at IDHS. "We look forward to his expertise in architecture, as well as his skills in leadership, business management and development, project management, and process development. He will be a great asset to the citizens of Indiana."

Perez has nearly 20 years of experience as a licensed architect. He co-founded fulcrum STUDIOS, Inc. in 2001, and was responsible for financial review and fiscal analysis, and managing administration for the office including human resources and legal. In 2008, fulcrum STUDIOS, Inc. joined Odle McGuire Shook, where Perez served as the Director of Operations.

He was named Construction Specifications Institute (CSI) Indianapolis Chapter member of the year in 2005. He is leading an environmentally friendly effort with Leadership in Energy and Environment Design (LEED), a Green Building Rating System that provides a suite of standards for environmentally sustainable construction. As a LEED Accredited Professional, Perez attained

experience on project reviews and analysis for possible long-term savings for energy-efficient design. He was involved on several projects analyzing energy efficiency, helping clients review a benefit analysis regarding initial up-front costs versus long-term operations costs, human resource implications, and implications on the environment.

Perez is also currently participating in the Stanley K. Lacy Executive Leadership Program as a member of Class XXXIV. The Lacy Leadership Association is Indianapolis's premier leadership network and provides a platform for members to address and advance community issues; and host networking, education and service events

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Use Common Sense When Decorating for Holiday Season

By Amber Stearns
11/30/2009

With Thanksgiving done and gone, it's time to decorate for the holidays. State Fire Marshal Jim Greeson says a little common sense can help keep your family and your belongings safe from fire hazards.

Candles are very popular this time of year, but Greeson says you should only use them if someone is going to be awake and in the room. Keep them away from children and pets, and place them on a tray or something non-flammable that can collect any drippings that may occur.

Greeson says several electric non-burning alternatives are now available that can be a good alternative to flaming candles.

The state fire marshal also encourages people to be aware of good Christmas tree safety to prevent tragedy. This includes making a fresh cut in a live tree, keeping it watered, and removing the tree if the needles get dry and brittle and fall away easily.

Greeson says the new LED lights are a good alternative to traditional lights because they burn a lot cooler and use less energy.

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[IDHS encourages preparedness and safety gifts for friends and loved ones this holiday season](#)

Posted: Monday, November 30, 2009 9:50 am | *Updated:* .

| 0 comments

The holiday shopping season is underway and the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) and the Office of the State Fire Marshal are encouraging Hoosiers to consider giving home preparedness and safety gifts to their friends and relatives during this holiday season.

"We know that the ability of individuals and families to be self-sustaining for at least three days would be vital during the response to a large scale disaster or emergency," said Joe Wainscott, executive director of IDHS. "Emergency Supply Kits in households are an important part of this preparedness. An Emergency Supply Kit is a collection of basic supplies that are stored together in case of an emergency. If you know of a family or individual that does not already have an emergency supply kit, these would be great gift ideas."

- [NOAA Weather Alert radio with extra batteries](#)

- [A disaster kit for the home, office or dormitory with such items as a first aid kit, bottled water \(one gallon per person/per day-three day minimum\), non-perishable food, blankets, flashlight and batteries](#)

- [A safety kit for the automobile with such items as jumper cables, flashlight, blankets, sand and a small shovel](#)

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[Other items such as medicines, extra clothing and pet care items might also be included in a kit. The items should be stored together in a container. Even if you cannot assemble all of the items as part of your gift, you can purchase the container and some of the items to at least help get the kit started. You can then include a printout of other items that can be included in the kit. This information, including a printable checklist, can be found on the IDHS website, at \[www.in.gov/dhs/getprepared.htm\]\(http://www.in.gov/dhs/getprepared.htm\).](#)

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[Indiana State Fire Marshal Jim Greeson says home safety gifts, such as smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors and fire extinguishers, are also thoughtful presents that are proven to save lives.](#)

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["If you know someone who doesn't have a working smoke alarm or carbon monoxide detector in their home, these items should be at the top of your gift list," said Greeson. "Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors are both proven life-savers, and what could be a better gift than something that protects the lives of the ones you love?"](#)

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Other fire safety and prevention gift ideas suggested by the State Fire Marshal include ABC-rated fire extinguishers, foldable ladders for second-story emergency escapes, and flameless scented candles.

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Most preparedness and gift items can be found in hardware and department stores.

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[Junk Ditch Relief Coming](#)

Staff reports

Thursday, 19 November 2009 08:01

Homeowners along the frequently flooded Junk Ditch, will soon be able to cut their losses and move on. After sustaining repeated damages during past flooding events, 40 houses along Junk Ditch will be purchased and demolished, and the area turned into greenspace.

“I know a number of homeowners along the Junk Ditch are thrilled with this tremendous news. It’s been my goal as mayor to do everything possible to protect homes from flooding and I share their joy,” said Mayor Tom Henry.

Today, the Indiana Department of Homeland Security presented Fort Wayne with a ceremonial check for \$1.5 million for flood mitigation along the Junk Ditch. The money represents the sum of two grants to purchase 40 homes in the area bordered by Taylor Street, Ardmore Avenue, Covington Road, and Freeman Street on the City’s near southwest side.

The City worked closely with the Maumee River Basin Commission to submit the grant applications earlier this year. The dollar amount for this grant, \$1.5 million, is the largest the City has ever received at one time.

"We are pleased with the work the City of Fort Wayne and the Maumee River Basin Commission has done... they are great partners to work with in mitigating for the homeowners of this area along the Junk Ditch. The City has worked diligently to move this process forward," said Manuela Johnson, Director of the Mitigation Program for the Indiana Department of Homeland Security.

“The Maumee River Basin Commission is happy to be of assistance in working on this project with the City of Fort Wayne and promoting its commitment to flood mitigation efforts and reducing flood damages,” said Rod Renkenberger, Executive Director of the Maumee River Basin Commission.

The agreement is still being drafted, but it’s expected that appraisals could begin by February with buyouts coming shortly thereafter.

The Junk Ditch is a tributary of the St. Marys. It often floods during heavy rains. An Army Corp of Engineers study determined permanent flood protection was not an option for this low lying area and the City has worked for years to find the funding to purchase homes. The City hopes to hear news on another grant application later this year which would cover 12 additional homes in the area.

Since the great flood of 1982 the City and the Maumee River Basin Commission has purchased more than 160 homes in flood prone areas.

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CLERE: Flood aid deadline approaching

By **ED CLERE**
Local Columnist

December 08, 2009 05:47 pm

— With Christmas only two weeks away, many homes are decorated for the holidays. Some, however, are a long way from being ready for lights and ornaments. Instead, the owners are hoping for drywall and carpet. Other homeowners are struggling financially after having scraped together money to repair damage from the Aug. 4 flooding.

The water left many homes soaked, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency left the residents high and dry. Other help is still available, but a critical deadline is less than a month away.

FEMA denied Indiana's request for disaster assistance. A subsequent appeal was likewise rejected. Meanwhile, Louisville received FEMA assistance. The weather that caused the flooding did not discriminate between Louisville and Southern Indiana, but the federal government did.

Last month, U.S. Rep. Baron Hill, D-9th District, introduced legislation that would ensure equitable treatment for communities bordering a state that receives FEMA assistance.

It's an idea worth considering, and it may help in the future. Right now, though, we're still trying to help folks who are having trouble recovering from the August flooding, and time is running out.

With that in mind, I've organized a meeting at 10 a.m. Saturday at the Clarksville Community Center. The meeting will include representatives from the Indiana Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Small Business Administration. State Sen. Connie Sipes, D-New Albany and State Rep. Steve Stemler, D-Jeffersonville, will join me in leading the meeting. In addition, I've asked Hill's office to send a representative, and I've invited local government officials and representatives of relief agencies from Floyd and Clark counties.

The Community Center is at 2311 Giltner Lane, off Veterans Parkway, between the Clarksville Town Hall and Sam's Club.

After FEMA denied Indiana's request for assistance, SBA stepped in to provide loans to businesses, homeowners and renters.

Loans up to \$200,000 are available for homeowners to repair or replace damaged or destroyed real estate. Homeowners and renters are eligible for loans up to \$40,000 to repair or replace damaged or destroyed personal property.

Businesses and nonprofit organizations may borrow up to \$2 million to repair or replace damaged or destroyed real estate, machinery and equipment, inventory and other business assets. Interest rates are as low as 2.75 percent for homeowners and renters, and 4 percent for businesses, with terms up to 30 years. Loan amounts and terms are set by SBA and are based on each applicant's financial condition.

Last month, SBA established outreach centers in both Floyd and Clark counties. The centers

were open for about a week. Now that they're closed, applications are available by calling SBA's Customer Service Center at 800-659-2955 or online at www.sba.gov/services/disasterassistance. At my request, SBA agreed to send a representative to the meeting on Saturday. The representative will be there to answer questions and take loan applications until 1 p.m. It has concerned me that SBA has received relatively few requests for assistance. As of last Friday, SBA had received only 15 home loan applications from Floyd County and 19 from Clark. Of those, five of the Floyd County applications had been approved, with a combined loan total of \$256,100. SBA had approved nine Clark County loans totaling \$243,800.

I think it's difficult for homeowners and renters to understand that an agency with a name that suggests it's all about helping businesses - the Small Business Administration - is also there to help them. I'm concerned that some of the neediest people may not be aware that they can apply for help from the SBA, or may assume they won't qualify for a loan so there is no point in applying.

That's not the case. Folks who are turned down for an SBA loan may be eligible to receive a grant of up to \$5,000 from the Indiana Disaster Relief Fund. SBA rejection is a required first step, and the SBA application deadline is Jan. 5.

Homeowners and renters who don't qualify for an SBA loan will automatically receive a letter from the Indiana Department of Homeland Security notifying them of the availability of the Disaster Relief Fund grants. IDHS officials were hoping to start sending letters this week. IDHS will inspect damaged property prior to making a grant determination. If repairs have already been completed, the applicant will be required to provide receipts.

Please help spread the word to homeowners and renters who may not read this column. If they're still in need as a result of the August flooding, it's important they attend the meeting on Saturday. None of us wants to find out in mid-January that someone who could have received a state grant missed the SBA deadline and therefore is ineligible for help.

Many individuals and organizations have stepped up to help since Aug. 4. Thanks to their efforts and the generosity of private donors, new furnaces and water heaters have been installed in a number of homes, and various repairs have been made.

Still, some folks remain in need, and you can help them by letting them know about the meeting on Saturday. That way, we can help make sure that what is under their tree this Christmas - even if it's only the carpet - is clean, warm and dry.

Rep. Ed Clere represents District 72 in the Indiana House of Representatives. He may be reached by phone at 1-800-382-9841, by e-mail at h72@in.gov or by mail at the Statehouse, 200 W. Washington St., Room 401-7, Indianapolis, IN 46204.

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