

Statement for the Record of Rep. Eshoo on H.R. 1250, the *Emergency Reporting Act*

U.S. House of Representatives

July 19, 2021

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1250, the *Emergency Reporting Act*, bipartisan legislation I co-authored to improve how the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) reports on and learns from the impact of natural disasters on our telecommunications networks.

The human impacts of disasters are worsened when our communications infrastructure is not resilient and this is an issue Californians know all too well. On October 28, 2019, 874 cell towers were out in California, caused by wildfires and power shutoffs. My constituents were panicked about not being able to call 9-1-1 during emergencies, receive emergency alerts, download evacuation maps, or check-in on loved ones. This horrific situation led my good friend, Congresswoman Matsui, and me to work on this legislation.

H.R. 1250, the *Emergency Reporting Act*, requires the FCC to hold field hearings after disasters, issue preliminary and final reports about each disaster, and ensure 9-1-1 centers know when outages will impact calls they may receive.

Wildfires are becoming more intense and more frequent because of climate change. Last year, the CZU Lightning Complex Fire burned 86,509 acres in my Congressional District, making it the 12th most destructive fire in California history. Seventy-seven thousand of my constituents were evacuated and the fire destroyed nearly 1,500 homes, businesses, and other buildings.

I've long called on FCC leadership to visit California and hold field hearings following the wildfires and associated power shutoffs, and many of my colleagues from California have done the same. We need to learn from every disaster, especially by listening to and learning from local public safety leaders, municipal, county, and state officials, and members of the communities impacted. This should be required.

Last Congress, the Energy and Commerce Committee Subcommittee on Communications and Technology held a hearing on February 27, 2020 on the *Emergency Reporting Act*. On March 10, 2020, the Subcommittee marked up the *Emergency Reporting Act*, and the full Committee did so on July 15, 2020. On September 21, 2020, the full House passed the bill via voice vote. Sadly, the Senate did not take up this critical bill.

On February 25, 2021, the legislation was reintroduced by Reps. Doris Matsui, Mike Thompson, Jared Huffman, Gus Bilirakis, and myself. Senators Klobuchar and Burr have companion legislation in the Senate.

H.R. 1250 is critical legislation for Californians impacted by wildfires. It will also help those on the Gulf Coast victimized by hurricanes, Midwesterners who've had their communities destroyed by tornadoes, and those in the Northeast who have experienced far too many superstorms.

I urge my House colleagues to once again vote for the *Emergency Reporting Act* and urge the Senate to do so as well.