



**STATE POLICY REPORT - DISASTER RESILIENCE:**

# 2023 SESSION RECAP

**NATIONAL CENTER FOR DISASTER PREPAREDNESS,  
COLUMBIA CLIMATE SCHOOL, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY**

## RECOMMENDED CITATION

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**Cover Photo:** The cleanup after the 2023 historic flood in Montpelier, VT. Photo credit: Lucia Bragg.

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Note: The content of this document, including all data and hyperlinks are current up to December 6, 2023. Hyperlinks will not be maintained after the publication date but are available in full length for the reader's reference.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As climate change continues to impact disaster frequency and intensity, the National Center for Disaster Preparedness (NCDP) explores disaster resilience laws enacted by state legislatures in 2023. This report analyzes legislation enacted across all 50 states and D.C., categorizing bills based on content. Inspired by the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Community Lifelines, these categories include Funding, Energy, Communications, Transportation, Safety and Security, Health & Medical, Food & Water, Housing, Hazardous Materials, Land Use, Governance, and Equity (1). Funding, Food & Water, and Equity each also have subcategories (see Table 1 for full definitions). Bills were compiled using a search function within LexisNexis's state legislative database, based on a set of keywords, to crawl all bill texts on state websites nationwide and return all bills within those parameters. NCDP policy staff then reviewed the bills to confirm relevance to one of the 12 categories or their subcategories. Methods used this year reflect a new, more sensitive, and granular methodology than our [2022 analysis](#).

During the 2023 legislative sessions, all 50 states and D.C. enacted 668 bills relating to natural disasters <sup>(1)</sup>. California led these states with 61 enacted bills, followed by Texas with 39 bills and Maryland with 36 bills. Colorado, Oregon, and Florida were each close behind with 32, 29, and 29 bills. This report is structured to focus on categories reflecting the greatest legislative activity and key topics within disaster resilience: Funding, Critical Infrastructure (Transportation, Energy, Communications), Health and Human Services (Housing, Health & Medical, Food & Water), Governance, and Equity. At least 365 of these bills relate to Funding - reflecting appropriations and assistance programs across all levels of government as well as individuals, the private/nonprofit sector, or insurance. These bills utilize federal funding streams, reflect cost-share requirements, or simply appropriate state funds for disaster resilience assistance programs, infrastructure projects, disaster recovery packages, and more. At least 247 of the 2023 enacted bills relate to Governance - setting broad state administrative changes, reforming or establishing new government authorities, reporting requirements, intergovernmental coordination, and transparency. At least 290 of these bills relate to Health and Human Services - protecting communities' access to food, water, housing, medical, and mass care services at all stages of a disaster or providing assistance for these needs after a disaster. At least 223 of this year's bills relate to Critical Infrastructure - bolstering the resilience of emergency communications systems, emergency transportation needs or evacuation routes, and electric grid reliability. At least 74 of these bills relate to Equity - aiming to make disaster preparedness more accessible, and reforming assistance programs or other processes to better serve minority, low-income, elderly, gender/LGBTQ+, rural populations, and people with disabilities.

While the analysis strives to be comprehensive, it is inherently limited by inconsistencies across state legislative sessions and procedures for posting legislative text, which affect the timing and availability of legislative texts. Similarly, categories have been adapted to balance granularity with usability and thus should be seen as general approximations, with more nuance and potential insights possible with additional analysis. While the vast majority of state legislatures adjourned by the analysis of this data (December 6, 2023), New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin were still in regular session <sup>(2)</sup>. Pre-filing for the 2024 legislative sessions had already begun in 15 states <sup>(3)</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The term Natural Disasters is categorized in this report for disasters that are not directly "human made," therefore excluding terrorism, gun violence, cybersecurity, infectious disease and the like. We recognize the term can be imprecise, however, it is used in federal (i.e., Stafford Act) and state law, which are topics of this report.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Figure 1: Total Enacted Bills by State

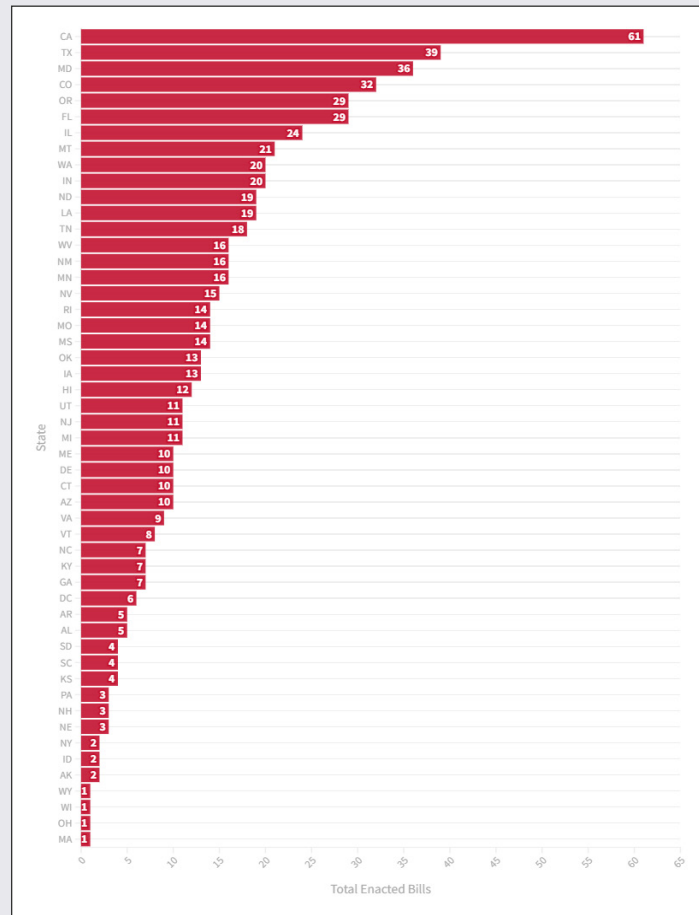
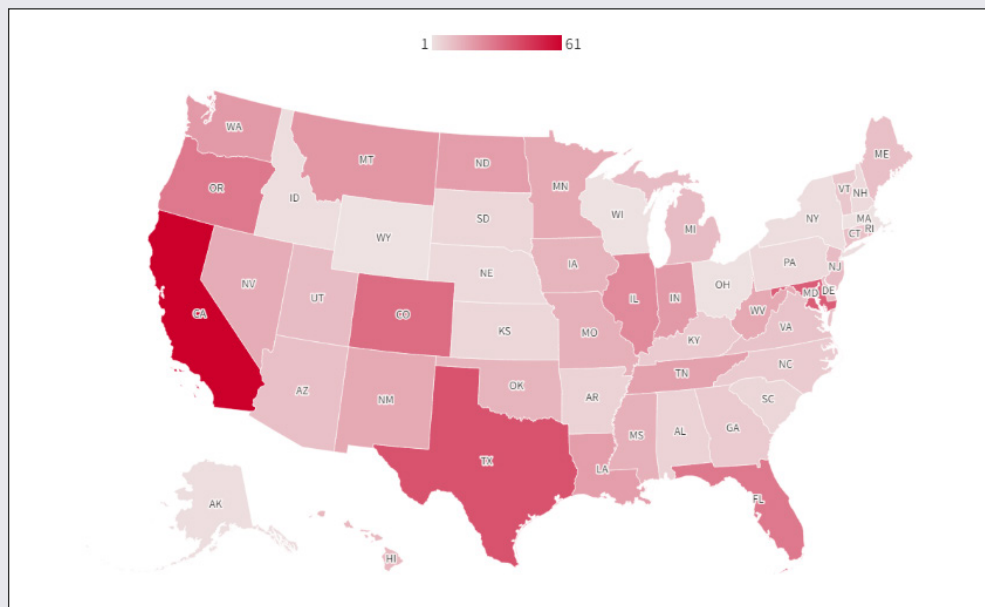
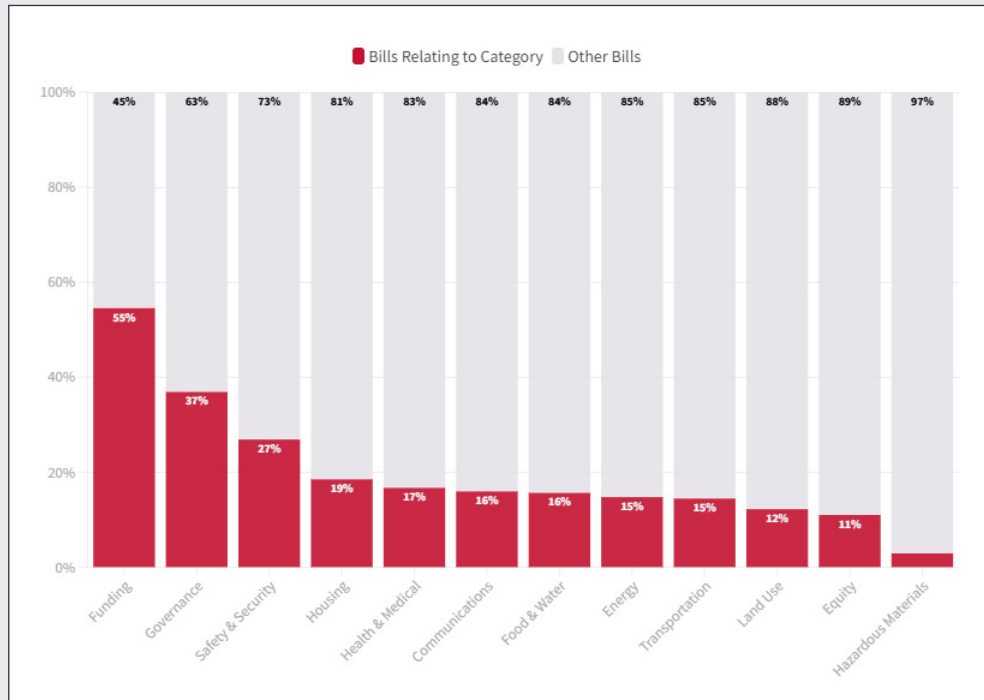


Figure 2: Total Enacted Bills by State



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Figure 3: Frequency of Category Use



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Figure 4: Frequency of Subcategory Use**

NCDP Categories	NCDP Sub-Categories	Frequency
Communications	-	██████████
Equity	Low-Income	████
Equity	Minority	███
Equity	Disability	███
Equity	Rural	███
Equity	Gender	██
Equity	Elderly	██
Equity	LGBTQ+	██
Food & Water	Water	██████
Food & Water	Food	████
Funding	State Government	████████████████████
Funding	Local Government	██████████
Funding	Federally-related Funding	██████████
Funding	Cost-share	████
Funding	Assistance to Individuals and Households	██████
Funding	Assistance to Private Sector and Nonprofits	██████
Funding	Insurance	████
Governance	-	██████████
Land Use	-	██████
Safety & Security	-	██████████
Health & Medical	-	██████
Housing	-	██████████
Energy	-	██████
Transportation	-	██████
Hazardous Materials	-	███

# Introduction

As climate change continues to impact a trend of increasingly frequent and intense natural disasters, state legislatures nationwide continue to prioritize disaster resilience in legislation. Disaster seasons of the last few years have broken records and cost governments billions in response and recovery costs. With 23 billion-dollar disasters, 2023 became the costliest year on record in the United States <sup>(4)</sup>. That number has so far risen to 25, surpassing the prior record of 22 billion-dollar disasters held in 2020 <sup>(4)(5)</sup>. The US has sustained 90 billion-dollar disasters over the past five years – an average of 18 per year <sup>(5)</sup>. The total cost of the last seven years (2016-2022) exceeds \$1 trillion, which amounts to over a third of the total cost of all disasters since 1980 <sup>(5)</sup>. And these figures come to vivid life for the communities across the country that have had to experience them. Who could forget Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria of 2017; the deadliest and most destructive wildfire season on record during the summer of 2018; the record-setting megafires of 2020; Hurricanes Ian, Fiona, and Merbok in 2022. <sup>(6)(7)(8)(9)(10)(11)</sup> And only a few months ago, the worst flooding in Vermont in over a decade and the deadliest US wildfire in over a century - destroying the town of Lahaina, Hawaii, and killing 115 people <sup>(12)(13)(14)</sup>. FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund – the main source of federal disaster aid for impacted communities – ran so low that it had to be restricted to only “lifesaving and life-sustaining activities” (or “immediate needs funding”) in September of 2023 due to unexpectedly high disaster spending <sup>(15)</sup>.

As indicated in our prior report, the federal government continues to fund disaster resilience efforts. Federal action in recent years has reflected a stronger emphasis on the importance of reducing disaster costs by investing in mitigation before a disaster occurs. Current initiatives are also further connecting climate change and equity to disaster resilience efforts. And climate mitigation policy is increasingly crafted alongside climate adaptation in the same legislative vehicles.

- **Disaster Recovery Reform Act (DRRA)** - Passed in 2018, this comprehensive bill made important reforms to disaster assistance and policy.
- **Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC)** - Passed as part of DRRA, funding for this program reached nearly \$3 billion for FY 2023 <sup>(16)</sup> after doubling every year since 2019.
- **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the Safeguarding Tomorrow through Ongoing Risk Mitigation (STORM) Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)** - These federal climate and pandemic packages, passed during the last two Congresses, all included increased funding for disaster resilience.
- **FEMA's 2022-2026 Strategic Plan** - The first of FEMA's strategic plans to make climate change and equitable solutions in disaster resilience a central priority <sup>(17)</sup>.

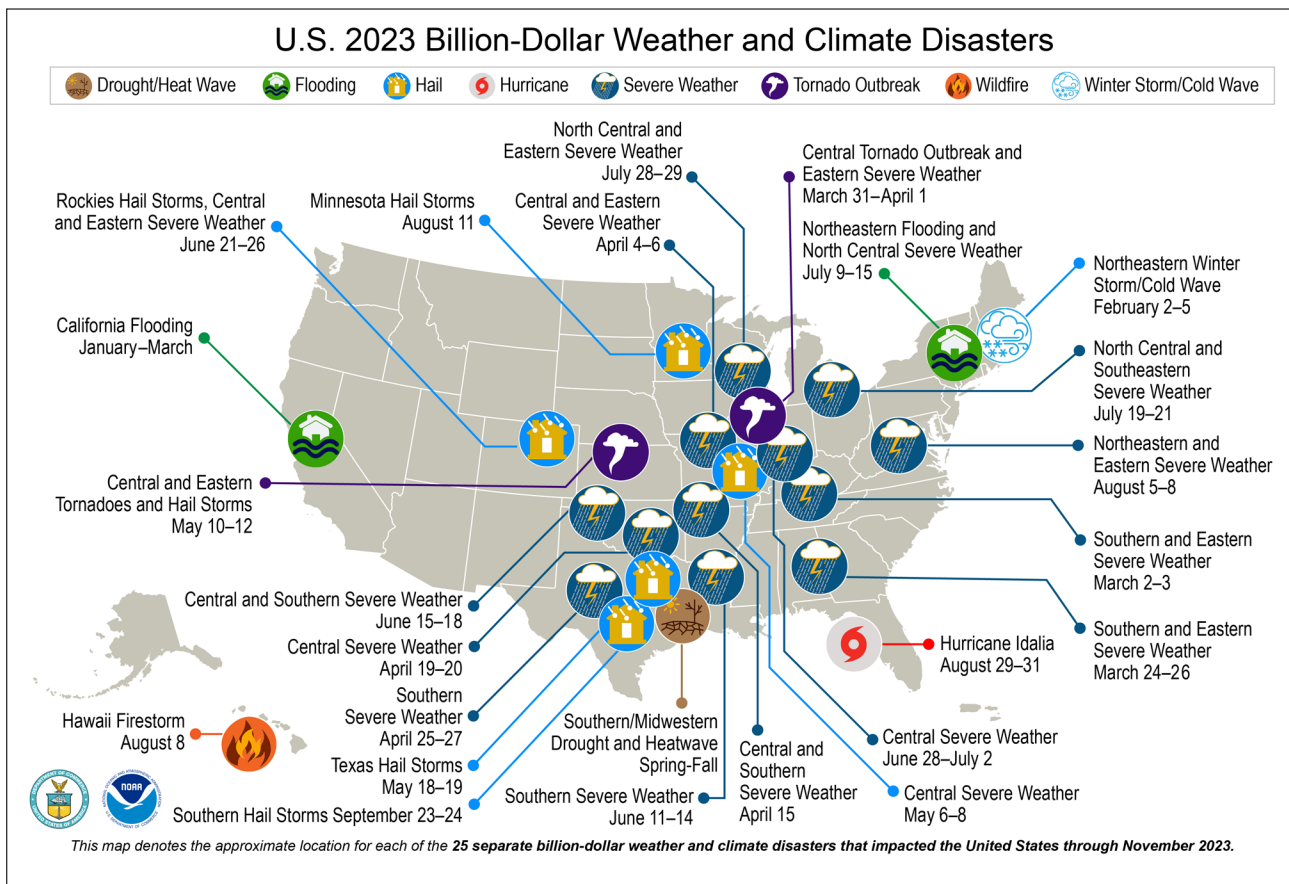
It all amounts to a perfect storm for states. Since 2017, Congress and Presidential administrations have also placed an increased emphasis on the state and local role in disaster management. For example, DRRA created a (pending) new post-disaster housing program that delegates control of certain housing programs to states, territories, and Tribal Nations. Recent Presidential administrations and Congressional leaders have urged states to cover a greater share of disaster costs <sup>(20)</sup>. As federal policy leaders simultaneously prioritize disaster investments while imploring states to engage further, state legislatures across the country are enacting a range of disaster resilience solutions.



# Introduction

This report builds on our prior analysis, establishing an understanding of state-level legislative activity for disaster-resilience. We hope this data can better capture legislative trends, progress, and disaster resilience improvements, as well as possible additional analysis.

**Figure 5: US Billion-Dollar Disasters (2023) <sup>(5)</sup>**



# Methods

## State Legislative Tracking Process

### Search Function

The state legislative tracking process uses a Boolean search function, based on a set of keywords, to crawl all bill texts on state legislative websites nationwide and return all bills within those parameters. These keywords included disaster\*, emergenc\*, flood\*, fire\*, hurricane\*, earthquake\*, storm\*, resilien\*, extreme weather, drought, “emergency management,” “state of emergency,” and “emergency declaration.” Results were limited to bills enacted between January 1 and December 6 of 2023. NCDP staff then analyzed each bill within the search results to assign content tags. Importantly, multiple categories can and often do apply to a single bill. This methodology differs from last year, when we relied on the National Conference of State Legislature’s pre-selected and filtered databases rather than LexisNexis.

### State Legislative Sessions

Each state legislature has its own website, process, and timing for making legislative text publicly available. Each state legislature also has its own legislative procedures - thresholds for bill passage, crossover and carryover dates, and legislative terminology. State legislative sessions also occur at slightly different points in the year, and some even skip years. While the vast majority of state legislatures adjourned by the analysis of this data (December 6, 2023), New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin were still in regular session <sup>(2)</sup>. Pre-filing for the 2024 legislative sessions had already begun in 15 states <sup>(3)</sup>.

## Categories and Subcategories

The legislative categories are based on FEMA’s Community Lifelines (in their 2022 form) <sup>(1)</sup>. The categories include Funding, Energy, Communications, Transportation, Safety & Security, Health & Medical, Food & Water, Housing, Hazardous Materials, Land Use, Governance, and Equity. FEMA’s “Food, Water, Shelter” lifeline is separated into “Housing” and “Food & Water” as Housing is a distinct component within disaster mitigation and recovery. We added “Funding,” and its subcategories (assistance to individuals and households, assistance to private and nonprofit sector, state government funding, assistance to local governments, federally related spending, cost share, and insurance) because funding is a primary function of state legislatures. Appropriations also overlap with most other categories, given funding is often required for critical infrastructure projects or various resilience programs. We also added “Governance” to capture another core function - the establishment or reform of authorities or requirements. We added “Equity” and its subcategories (minority, low-income, elderly, gender, LGBTQ+, and rural) to capture an increased awareness within the disaster space on the disproportionate impact of disasters on underserved communities. A fair trend of bills also related to location-based mitigation projects (those focused on coastal flooding, nature-based solutions) or designation changes - flood control districts, specified hazard areas, zoning etc. We added a Land Use category for these bills. We aim to balance granularity of categories with usability, so while not every category will be a perfect reflection of the bill’s contents, we avoid splintering 668 bills across too many categories. One bill will typically fall under multiple categories, so some figures will show frequency of category use and may add up to more than the total count of enacted bills. We structured this report on categories, or category groupings, that reflect those most frequently used or those with the most relevance to emerging trends.

# Methods

**Table 1: Scope of Categories and Subcategories**

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	SCOPE
<b>Communications</b>	--	Communications infrastructure resilience, responder communications, emergency alerts and warning systems, 911 and Dispatch, educational messaging.
<b>Energy</b>	--	Energy infrastructure resilience, energy grid reliability/redundancy, regulating utilities, utility accountability/transparency.
<b>Equity</b>	Elderly	Reforming or establishing disaster assistance, programs, or systems with respect to elderly populations.
	Disability	Reforming or establishing disaster assistance, programs, or systems with respect to disabled populations.
	Gender	Reforming or establishing disaster assistance, programs, or systems with respect to gender.
	LGBTQ+	Reforming or establishing disaster assistance, programs, or systems with respect to LGBTQ+ populations.
	Low-Income	Reforming or establishing disaster assistance, programs, or systems with respect to low-income populations.
	Minority	Reforming or establishing disaster assistance, programs, or systems with respect to minority populations.
	Rural	Regulating the use of disaster program funds with respect to rural populations.
<b>Food &amp; Water</b>	Food	Food, food systems, nutrition, agriculture.
	Water	Water infrastructure, stormwater management, drinking water, sewer. Includes water conservation as it relates to drought conditions.
<b>Health &amp; Medical</b>	--	Medical care, mass care, public health, medical supply chain, fatality management.
<b>Housing</b>	--	Housing repair/replacement, emergency shelter, temporary housing, home buyout programs, property tax relief, homeless populations, etc.
<b>Funding</b>	Individuals and Households	Monetary or other assistance to individuals or households. Often references food/water, housing, wraparound services, preparedness planning, underserved populations etc. Includes reforms that better enable individuals and households in disaster resilience.
	Private Sector and Non-profits	Monetary or other assistance for businesses, non-profits organizations, or other non-government entities.
	Local Government	The establishment or reform of state disaster programs including funding with specific reference to local government.
	State Government	Funding by or for state government, including the establishment or reform of state disaster programs. Increased, decreased, or level appropriations to state programs, including budget bills.
	Federally-related Spending	Any reference to the use of, or coordination with, federal funds.
	Cost-share	Any reference to cost coverage of a single program, project, or funding stream by two or more levels of government.
	Insurance	Any reference to public or private insurance for natural disaster impacts (i.e., flood insurance).
<b>Governance</b>	--	State administrative changes: Jurisdictional changes, offices/positions created or reformed, reporting requirements. Also includes EMAC/mutual aid and permitting/licensing rules.
<b>Hazardous Materials</b>	--	Facilities, HAZMAT, pollutants, contaminants.
<b>Land Use</b>	--	Designation of flood/fire/hazard districts, zoning, coastal flooding solutions, nature-based mitigation.
<b>Safety and Security</b>	--	Law Enforcement/Security, Fire Service, Search and Rescue, Government Service, Community Safety.
<b>Transportation</b>	--	Highway/roadway/motor vehicle, mass transit, railway, aviation, maritime.

# 2023 Legislative Trends: Funding

## Funding

During the 2023 legislative sessions, 49 states and D.C. enacted at least 365 bills related to the appropriation or allocation of funding for resilience measures across all disaster phases. These bills represent 55% of all disaster legislation enacted. Of these, 300 fund state agencies and programs, 168 provide funding to local governments, 116 relate to federal funding, 52 involve cost-share or matching between multiple levels of government, 95 provide assistance to individuals or households, 87 provide funding to the private and nonprofit sectors, and 45 relate to insurance mechanisms to fund disaster mitigation.

### Example Legislation:

- **Colorado [SB 5](#)**. appropriates \$1 million annually to expand the state’s forestry workforce. The bill:
  - Creates the Timber, Forest Health, and Wildfire Mitigation Industries Workforce Development Program to reimburse timber businesses and forest health or wildfire mitigation entities for the costs of hiring interns. Students from historically underrepresented populations must be prioritized for internships.
  - Authorizes the creation of new, and expansion of existing, wildfire mitigation and forestry programs at institutions of higher education.
  - Provides for the administration of wildland fire prevention and mitigation educators recruiting program.
  - Funds the development of educational materials on forestry and wildfire mitigation careers for distribution at high schools.
  
- **North Dakota [H.B. 1070](#)** - Utilizes federal STORM Act funds to establish the Hazard Mitigation Revolving Loan Fund. The fund:
  - Directly offers low-interest loans to counties and cities for projects that will reduce disaster risks for homeowners, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and communities. Authorizes such political subdivisions to then make loans to private property owners for hazard mitigation projects for buildings.
  - Includes as eligible activities projects that address natural hazards; zoning, land use, floodplain management, and hazard mitigation planning changes; and the establishment and implementation of current building code standards relevant to disasters and natural hazards.
  
- **Oregon [HB 3059](#)** establishes the Oregon Disaster Response Assistance Matching Fund, and appropriates \$2.3 million to the Fund. The Oregon Department of Emergency Management may use the Fund for grants to local governments for use as matching funds in the event that federal disaster assistance is conditioned on the contribution of matching funds by the recipient. Funding can also be used to support a local government’s disaster response efforts in general.

# 2023 Legislative Trends: Funding

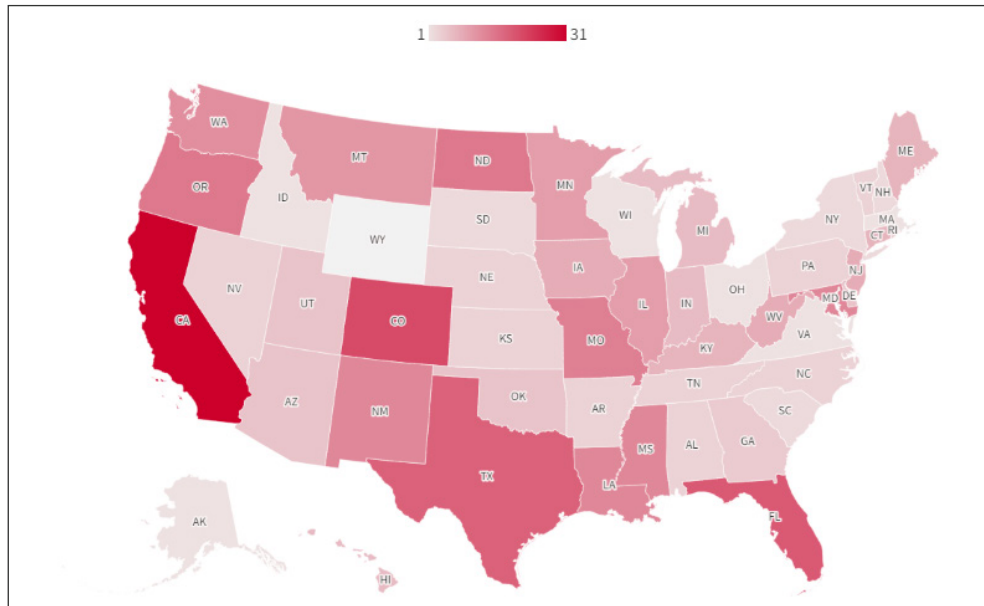
## Example Legislation:

- **Maine [HB 5](#)** establishes the Winter Energy Relief Payment Program to offset high heating costs for residents during the 2022-23 winter months. The bill appropriates funds to the Maine State Housing Authority for emergency funds:
  - To households to avert energy crises.
  - For emergency housing for homelessness prevention.
  - For heating assistance to households eligible for the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.
  
- **Washington [HB 1728](#)**. Directs the emergency management division of the state military department to create a new disaster resilience program for:
  - Coordinating funding to maximize federal, state, local, and private investments.
  - Enhancing interagency collaboration, education, and outreach programs.
  - Disaster policy research and recommendations.
  - Facilitating the development of a statewide disaster resilience strategy.

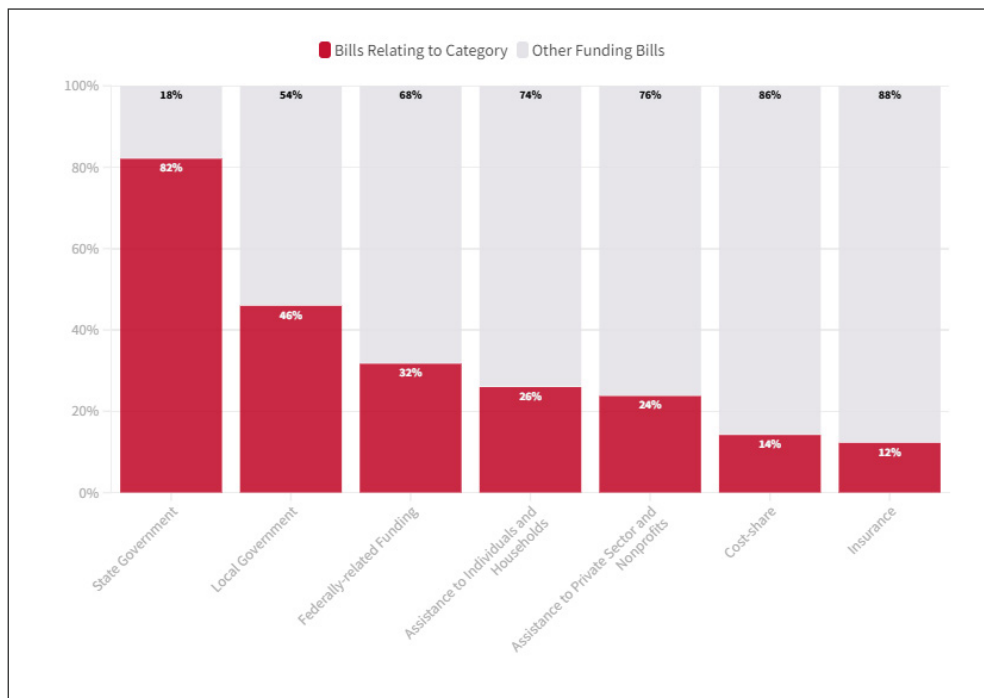
The bill includes mention of minority and other underserved communities within these priorities.

# 2023 Legislative Trends: Funding

**Figure 6: Funding Bills by State**



**Figure 7: Funding Bills by Subcategory Use**



# 2023 Legislative Trends: Critical Infrastructure

## Critical Infrastructure: Transportation, Energy, and Communications

During 2023, 46 states plus D.C. enacted at least 223 bills related to critical infrastructure resilience, representing a third of all enacted disaster bills. Among these, 99 relate to energy. These included measures on grid resiliency, reliability, and redundancy; energy efficiency in the context of resilience; and often overlapped with emissions reduction or renewable energy provisions within broader climate change bills. Ninety-seven bills relate to transportation, including resilience improvements to highway infrastructure, rebuilding of disaster-damaged roads and bridges, and the maintenance or improvement of emergency evacuation and supply delivery routes during disaster events. Many appropriations bills simply pay for needed emergency vehicles, like fire trucks or planes used during disaster events. Further, 107 of these bills relate to communications systems, including upgrades to 9-1-1 services, resilience improvements to physical communications infrastructure, establishing or reforming early warning systems, or broader public awareness campaigns.

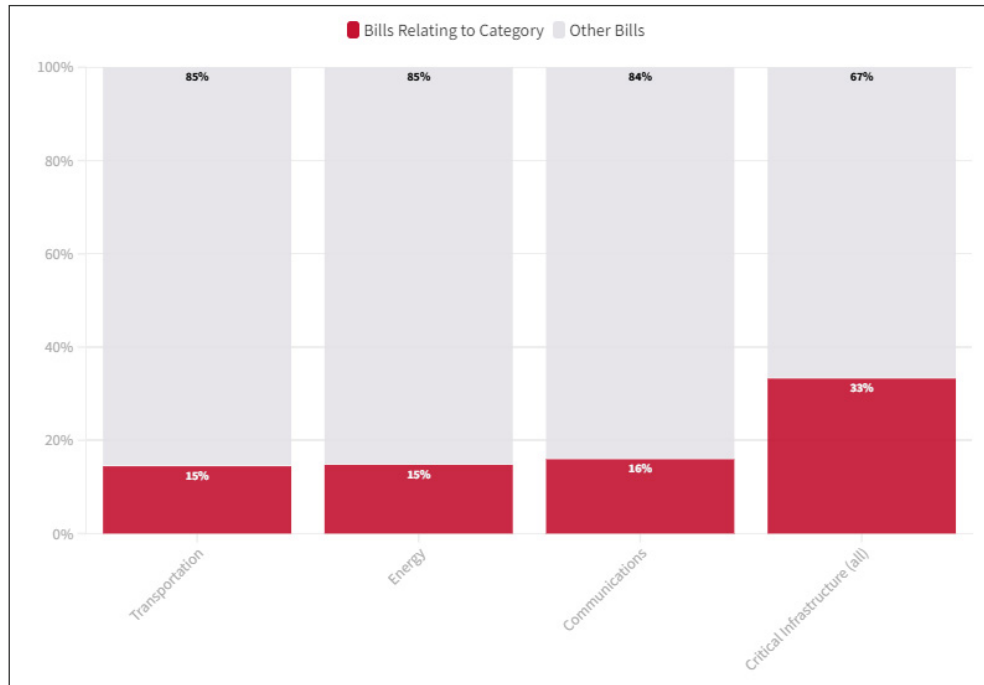
### Example Legislation:

- **California** [AB 414](#), the Digital Equity Bill of Rights, establishes that it is “the principle of the state” to ensure digital equity for all residents. This means access to broadband that meets specific requirements, including ensuring public safety via reliable access to emergency response services and emergency alert systems in the event of disasters.
- **Washington** [HB 1329](#) prevents electricity shutoffs for failure to pay during extreme heat, and requires utilities to offer payment plan options to low-income residents.
- **Washington** [HB 1032](#). Inspired by the wildfire in Paradise, California, this bill requires investor-owned and consumer-owned electrical utilities to revise and submit their wildfire mitigation plans to the legislature by October 2024, and update at least every three years thereafter.
- **New Mexico** [SB 309](#) extends the time of expenditure to Fiscal Year 2025 for the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Department to purchase radios and to plan, design, purchase, install and equip an emergency broadcast system, including transmitters, translators and emergency operation communications equipment in Hidalgo County.
- **Vermont** [HB 479](#), the FY 2024 Transportation Bill, enacts a range of changes to Vermont’s annual Transportation Program. The bill in part directs the Transportation Agency to develop a State Resilience Improvement Plan detailing how federal funds from the Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation (PROTECT) formula program (established via the IIJA) will be used to address transportation resilience. The plan must address:
  - The use of data tools to conduct vulnerability assessments, response strategies, and evacuation planning.
  - Projects that improve resilience of “surface transportation assets” during a disaster.
  - Community resilience and evacuation route activities.

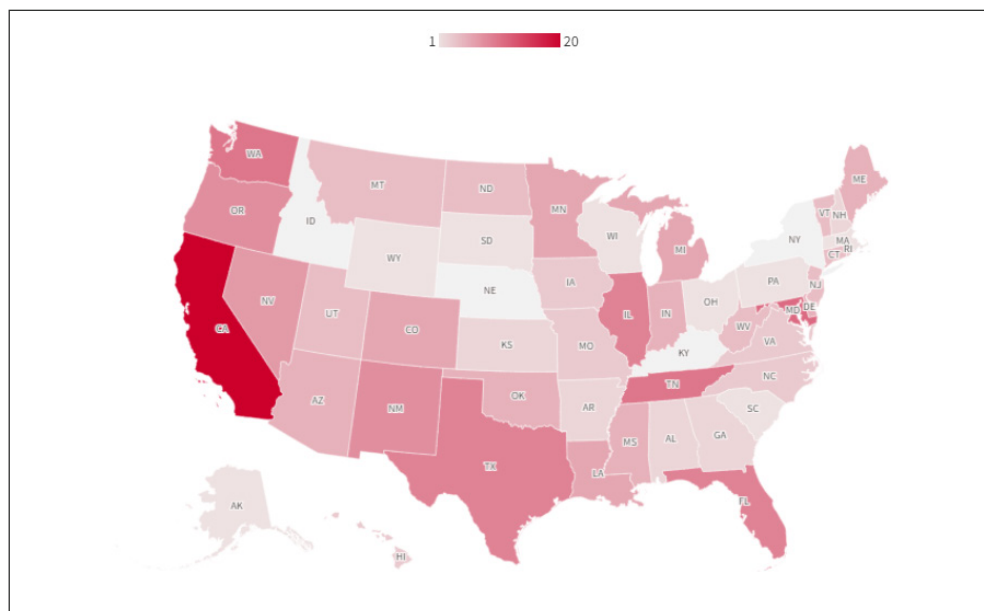
The agency must also develop recommendations for the integration of carbon reduction, resilience, and equity factors into its project prioritization system.

# 2023 Legislative Trends: Critical Infrastructure

**Figure 8: Critical Infrastructure Bills by Category Use**



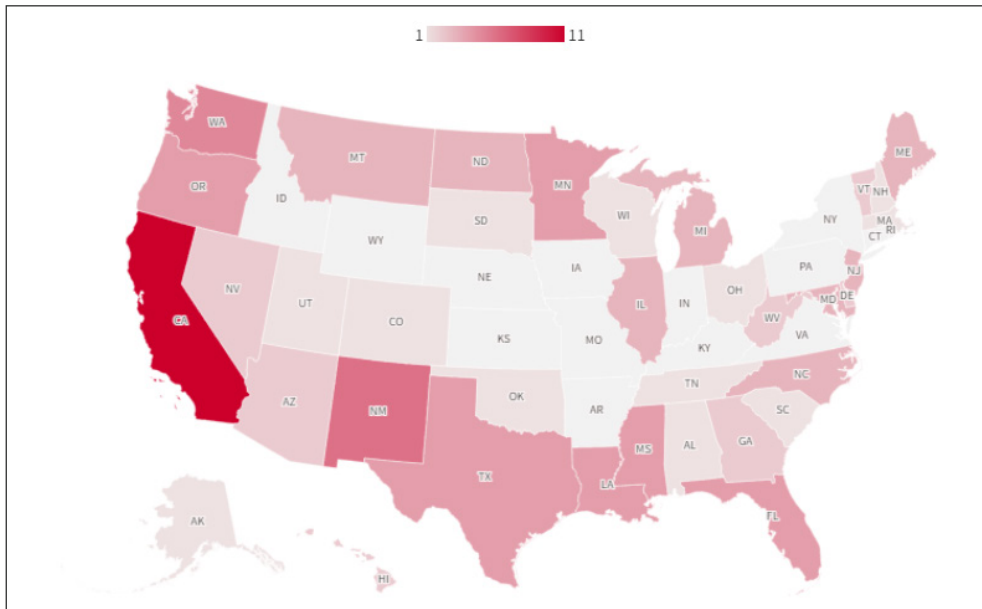
**Figure 9: Critical Infrastructure Bills by State**



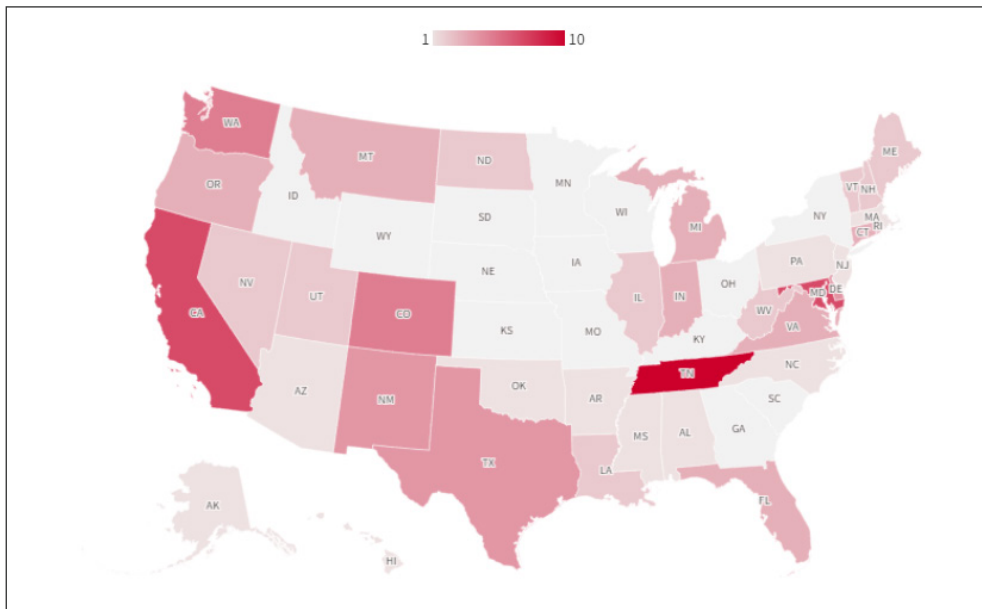


# 2023 Legislative Trends: Critical Infrastructure

**Figure 10: Transportation Bills by State**

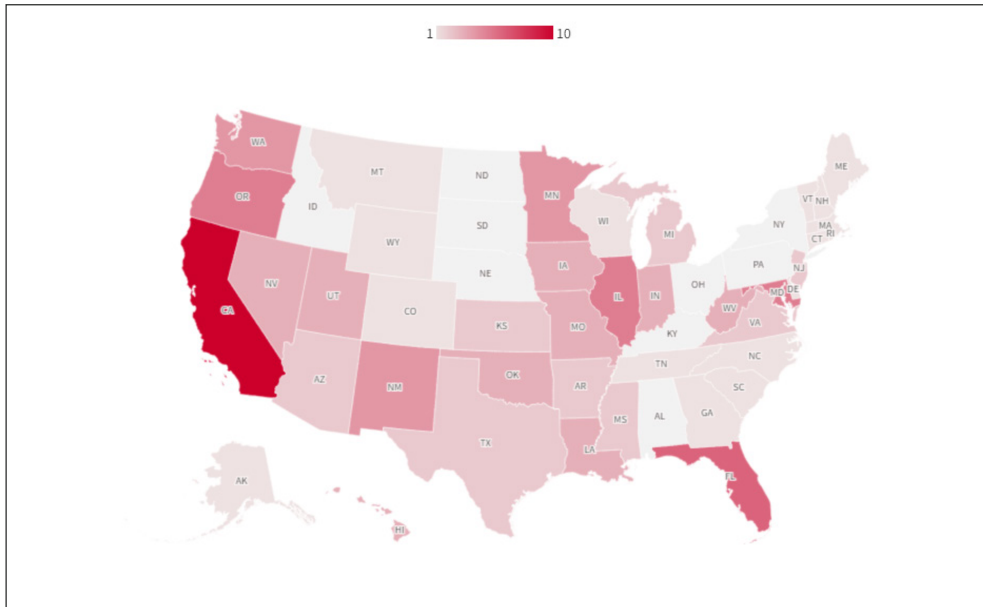


**Figure 11: Energy Bills by State**



# 2023 Legislative Trends: Critical Infrastructure

**Figure 12: Communications Bills by State**



# 2023 Legislative Trends: Health & Human Services

## Health & Human Services: Housing, Health & Medical, Food & Water

In 2023, 49 states enacted 290 bills related to health & human services (made up of NCDP categories Housing, Health & Medical, and Food & Water), covering nearly half of enacted disaster bills. Overall, Health & Human Services were more common than Critical Infrastructure bills, with 290 and 223 respectively. Housing in particular emerged as a leading topic, with 124 bills containing these provisions. These most often reflected post disaster rebuilding assistance for homeowners, property insurance or tax benefits related to hazard impacts, retrofitting or building homes to resilient building codes, and post-disaster sheltering assistance for individuals. At 112 bills, the Health & Medical category accounted for nearly as many bills as Housing. These measures focused on ensuring emergency or long-term health care services remained operational despite disaster disruptions, whether via virtual health options, licensing or legal flexibilities, establishing health-related disaster and crisis support teams, or otherwise. Food & Water bills were also nearly as common, at 105 bills, with twice as many related to water versus food systems. States seek to address increasingly common drought and flooding impacts by designating authorities responsible for water supply resilience, setting limitations or prioritization of water use types, or funding water conservation or stormwater management projects. Some of the states of the Colorado River basin recently negotiated cutbacks in usage due to drought, and other western states have pursued their own water conservation measures.

### Example Legislation:

- **California** [AB 102](#), appropriates, as part of an omnibus spending bill, \$5 million to the California Underserved and Small Producer Program for drought or flood relief for socially disadvantaged, small-scale and medium-scale agricultural producers. It caps the maximum award for small organic dairies to \$100,000.
- **Kentucky** [HB 226](#). This bill:
  - Requires the Department for Behavioral Health, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities to plan and execute behavioral health-related community crisis and disaster response.
  - Establishes memoranda of understanding with local partners to provide crisis response services after a disaster.
  - Develops and maintains a network of credentialed crisis-ready volunteers to provide services after a disaster.
- **New Mexico** [SB 1](#) establishes the Regional Water Systems Resiliency Act. A response to water infrastructure damage from a range of disasters, the bill aims to improve water resilience by allowing smaller water systems to join together to improve their processes and reliability.
- **Texas** [SB 2406](#) allows hospitals in certain counties to drill a water well for use in the event of an emergency or natural disaster.

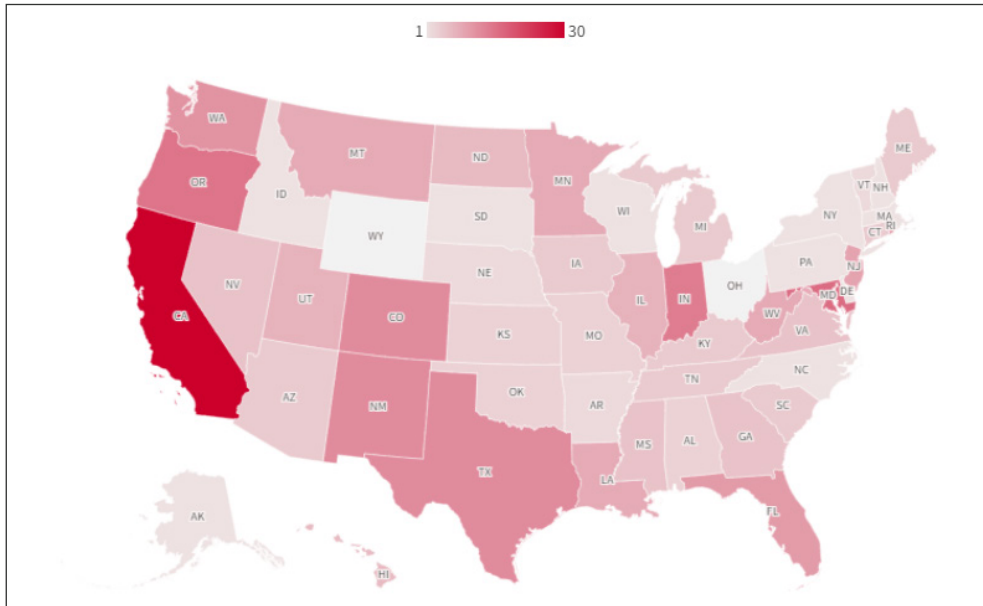
# 2023 Legislative Trends: Health & Human Services

## Example Legislation:

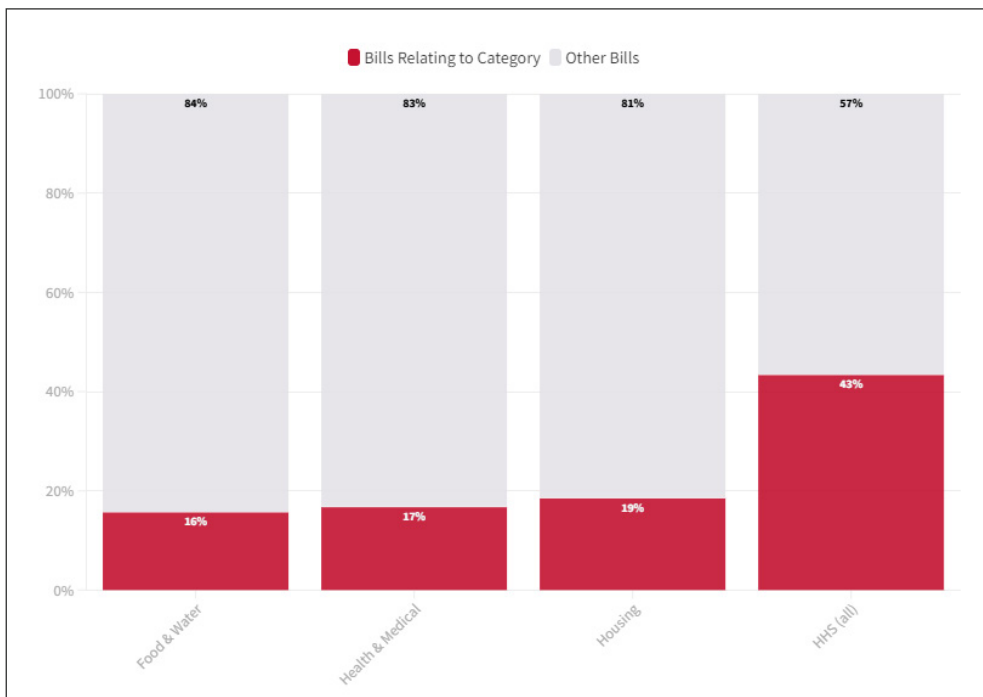
- **Utah [HB 150](#)** relates to water shortage emergencies. The bill:
  - Allows the governor to declare a temporary water shortage emergency by executive order if man-made or natural causes other than drought threaten the availability or quality of an essential water supply or the operation of the economy.
  - Allows the state to seize water from farmers and ranchers during a water emergency for public use including (in order of priority): drinking, sanitation, fire suppression, commercial agriculture animal welfare needs, and generation of electricity.
  - Requires the state Department of Agriculture to reimburse farmers and ranchers for any lost crops.
  - Requires the state Department of Agriculture to issue 0% loans to producers whose water use is interrupted by the emergency.
- **Florida [HB 881](#)** reforms the existing My Safe Florida Home Program. The bill:
  - Expands eligibility for mitigation grants by increasing the cap on the insured value of an eligible dwelling from \$500,000 to \$700,000.
  - Increases the amount that low-income homeowners may receive from a grant without having to provide a matching payment from \$5,000 to \$10,000.
  - Eliminates the requirement that a property eligible for a mitigation grant must be located in the “wind-borne debris region.”
  - Makes various changes to inspection processes.

# 2023 Legislative Trends: Health & Human Services

**Figure 13: Health & Human Services Bills by State**

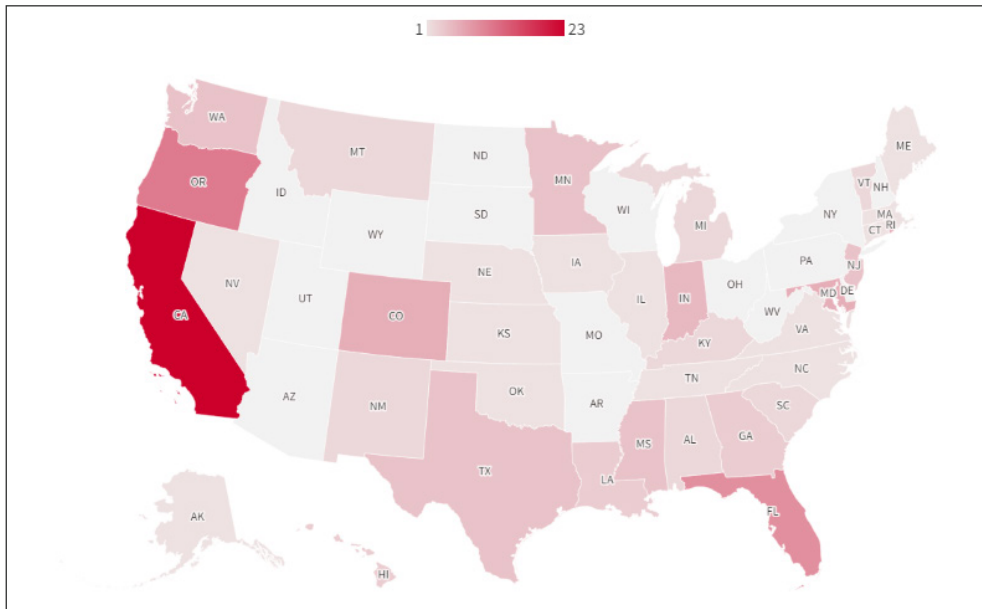


**Figure 14: Health & Human Services Bills by Category Use**

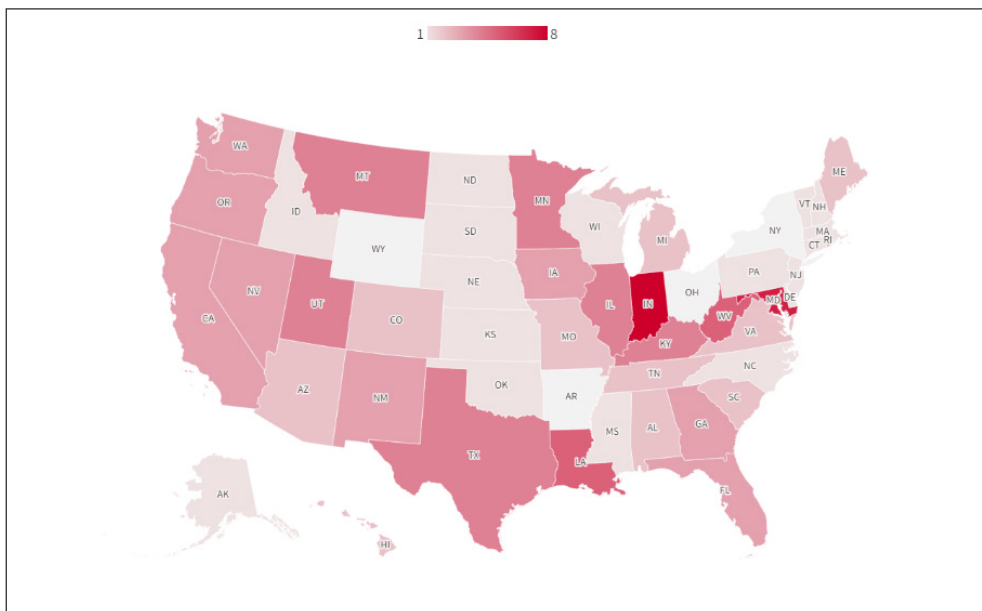


# 2023 Legislative Trends: Health & Human Services

**Figure 15: Housing Bills by State**

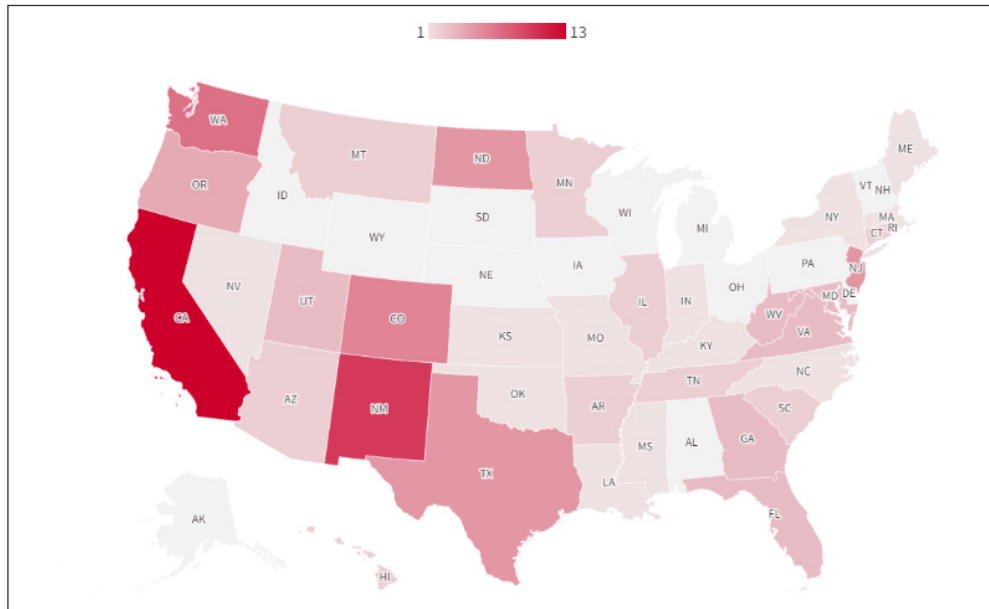


**Figure 16: Health & Medical Bills by Category Use**



# 2023 Legislative Trends: Health & Human Services

**Figure 17: Food & Water Bills by State**



# 2023 Legislative Trends: Governance

## Governance

47 states plus D.C. enacted at least 247 bills related to governance in 2023, including administrative, jurisdictional, and reporting changes. Just over a third of all disaster bills enacted in 2023 contain these provisions and frequently overlapped with the Safety & Security category. These bills established new public entities or roles to improve state disaster management capacity (such as disaster-related task forces or Chief Resilience Officers), clarified intergovernmental cooperation and mutual aid amid disaster operations, or reformed existing authorities such as national guard activation procedures or the terms by which emergencies can be declared by the Governor. Many of these bills also simply required disaster-related studies or reports from agencies, and some related to legal reforms such as disaster-related price gauging penalties.

### Example Legislation:

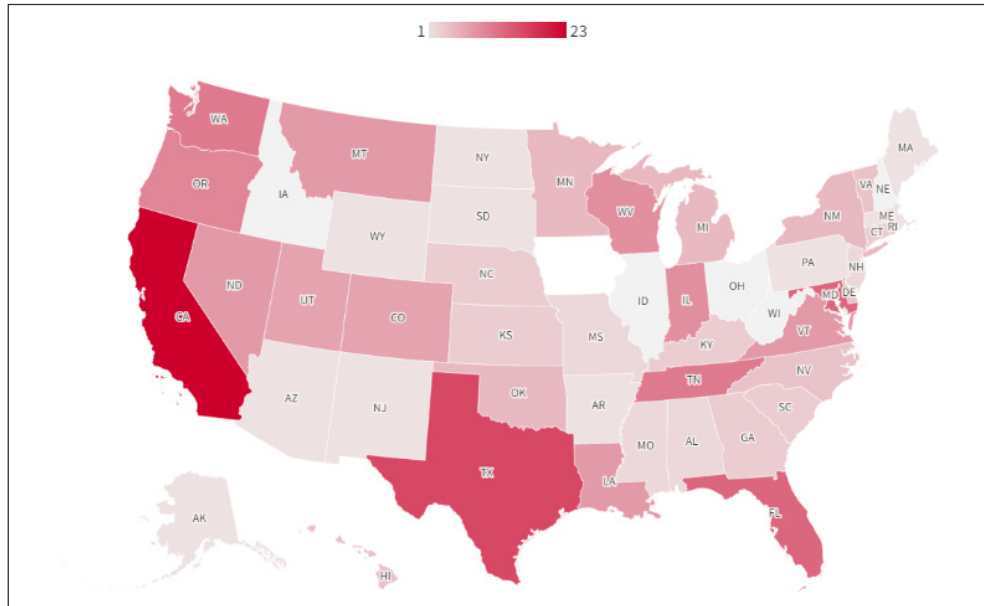
- **Colorado SB 166** creates the Wildfire Resiliency Code Board within the Department of Public Safety. The Board must establish rules concerning the adoption of codes and standards aimed at hardening structures or reducing fire risk in a structure's defensible space surrounding structures in Colorado's Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI). The act also creates a cash fund for the Board, appropriating \$250,000 to the fund. The bill requires that governing bodies within the WUI adopt the Board's established codes within 3 months of their creation.
- **Louisiana HB 526** creates the position of Chief Resilience Officer in the office of the Governor. It also creates an Interagency Resilience Coordination Team, and a Louisiana Resilience Task Force to coordinate and align disaster resilience policies, plans, budgets, and resources.
- **West Virginia SB 128** limits and clarifies authorities and procedures governing states of emergency. The bill:
  - Limits states of emergency to 60 days, unless the legislature acts (via concurrent resolution) to extend.
  - Limits the scope of the Governor's authority to declare states of emergency, and the expanded powers held by the Governor during emergencies.
  - Distinguishes between states of emergency and states of preparedness.
- **West Virginia SB 677** expands upon the qualifications, powers, and duties of the State Resiliency Officer and the Deputy State Resiliency Officer to include:
  - The execution of a vulnerability assessment of critical infrastructure (hospitals, schools, fire stations, and comparable facilities) at the state and municipal levels.
  - Leadership in state emergency planning efforts during states of emergency.
  - The development of a new state Flood Resiliency Plan.

The bill also provides for receipt and disbursement of funds from the West Virginia Disaster Recovery Trust Fund.

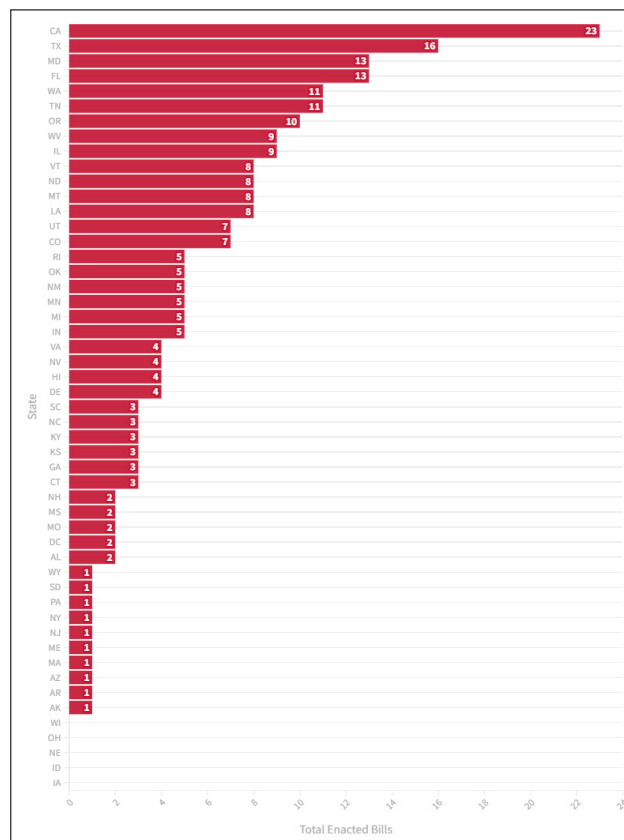


# 2023 Legislative Trends: Governance

**Figure 18: Governance Bills by State**



**Figure 19: Governance Bills by State**



# 2023 Legislative Trends: Equity

## Equity

During 2023, 27 states plus D.C. enacted at least 74 bills relating to equity in disaster resilience – over 10 percent of disaster resilience bills overall. Of these, 31 bills focused on low-income populations, 24 bills on individuals with disabilities, 22 bills on minority populations, 18 bills on rural populations, 13 bills on elderly populations, 8 bills on gender, and 5 bills on LGBTQ+ populations. Similar to last year, eligibility criteria for programs in these bills prioritize underserved populations and those with more limited ability or means to recover after a disaster. They also require that vulnerable communities be included in stakeholder engagement or planning processes. Equity has emerged as a higher priority topic within the disaster space only in recent years, marked in part by the Biden administration’s continued focus on equity within federal policy and rhetoric. FEMA’s 2024-2026 Strategic Plan is the first in the agency’s history to do the same, and that trend has become evident on the state level as well.

### Example Legislation:

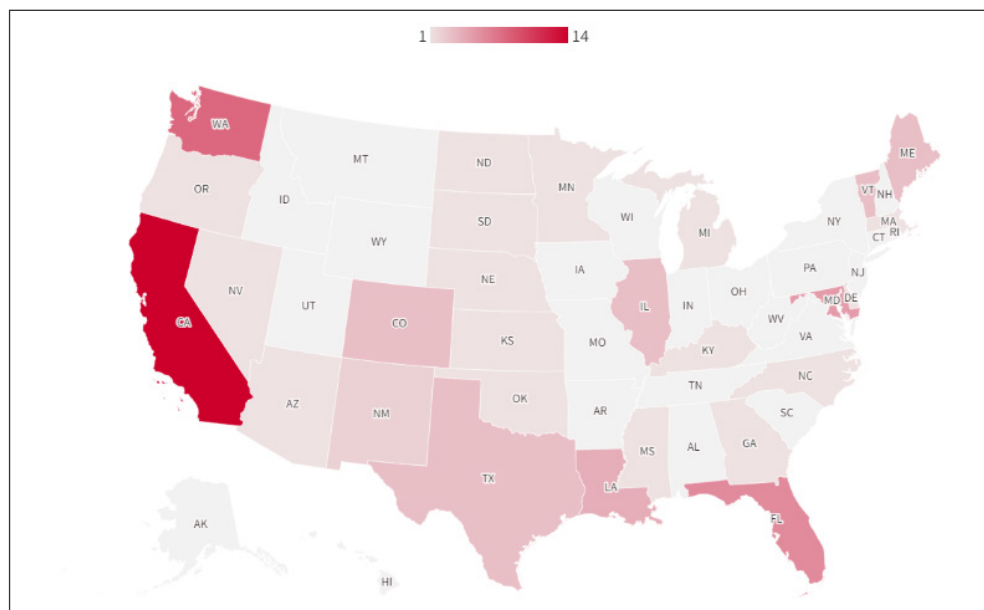
- **California** [AB 876](#) exempts the Pajaro River flood control project from certain state and local environmental laws and regulations that may hinder its implementation. The legislature allows this flexibility due to “historical inequities in state and federal flood control funding and policies [that] have left the communities in the Pajaro River watershed, many of which are disadvantaged and economically distressed, with low protection from flood risks.” The bill cites per capita income that is less than half the state and national averages, and the high prevalence of renters or unhoused people “with minimal to no financial security.”
- **Colorado** [HB 1237](#) appropriates \$77,009 from the general fund to University of Colorado's Natural Hazards Center, via the Department of Education, for a study identifying which public emergency management entities need to be able to provide emergency alerts in minority languages and provide live interpretation during 911 calls. This includes review of municipalities, sheriff's offices, counties, fire districts, and local 911 agencies. This study must:
  - Identify the necessary components of a multi-hazard early warning system in order reach individuals without having to “opt in” and with the ability to use minority languages.
  - Identify emergency alert system gaps.
  - Identify federal or other funding that can be used to assist jurisdictions in these endeavors.
  - Determine best practices for hiring multilingual and multicultural staff.
  - Explore how to engage local community organizations connected to minority populations.

# 2023 Legislative Trends: Equity

## Example Legislation:

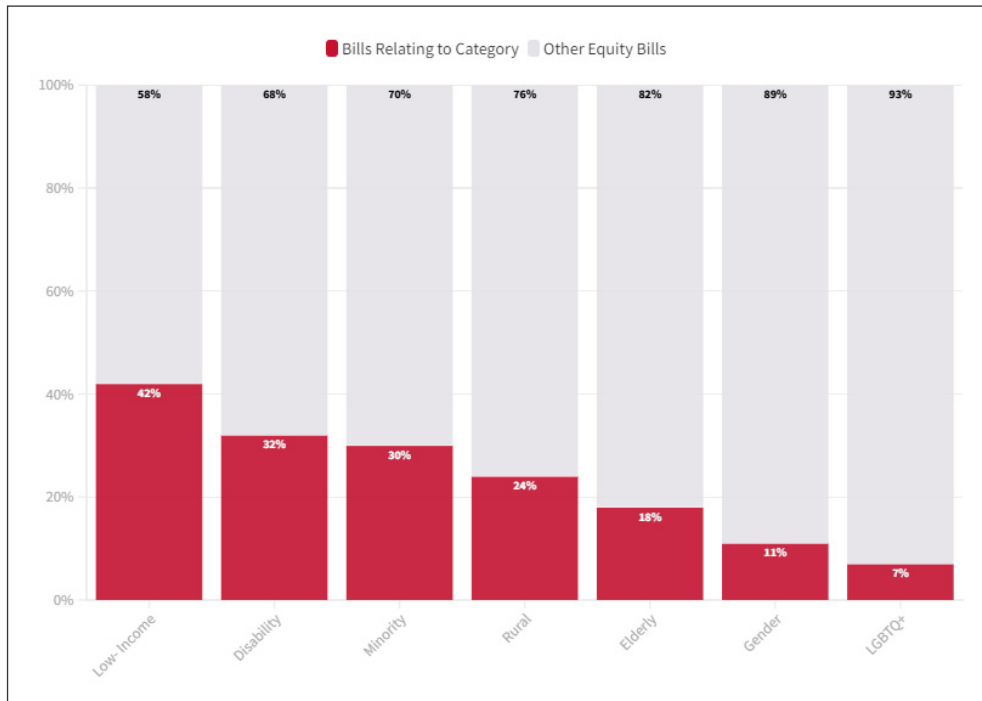
- **Delaware** [HB 99](#) establishes requirements for the state’s Climate Action Plan, including the state’s current and future vulnerability to climate change risks. The bill references the increased threats to “historically overburdened and underserved communities,” and requires that plan development allow for opportunities for public input that are inclusive of these communities.
- **Florida** [HB 1277](#) creates a Persons with Disabilities Registry that must be kept confidential except for use by law enforcement agencies, county emergency management agencies, or local fire departments in furtherance of the official duties and responsibilities.
- **Illinois** [HB 3680](#) amends the Children with Disabilities Article of the School Code to require that a student’s Individualized Education Plan reflect any accommodations that the student may need during natural disasters or other emergencies.

**Figure 20: Equity Bills by State**



# 2023 Legislative Trends: Equity

**Figure 21: Equity Bills by Subcategory Use**



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