

THE RESILIENCE FORCE

Summary: Drawn from the Undertaking National Initiatives to Tackle Epidemic Act (“UNITE Act of 2020”), introduced by Senators Markey (D-Mass) and Van Hollen (D-MD), the Resilience Force will surge employment at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the fight against the coronavirus and natural disasters.

Background on the Force

- Along with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), FEMA is a key part of the whole-of-government effort to combat the COVID-19 outbreak and to responsibly reopen the country. However, FEMA’s workforce of approximately 20,000 must be significantly expanded to address the growing national needs of testing, tracing, and managing emergency supply chain logistics for states and communities in need. FEMA has unique existing hiring authorities and experience that make it a very practical vehicle for the surge workforce needed at this time. In addition, FEMA will need to respond to natural disasters with a heavier-than-average hurricane season predicted this year. By funding existing authorities at FEMA, tens of thousands of Americans can serve the country in living-wage positions.

Overview of the Resilience Force:

- Appropriates \$6.5 billion in FY2020, 2021, and 2022 needed to hire and train 62,000 additional FEMA Cadre of On-Call Response/Recovery Employees (CORE) to perform public health functions and respond to natural disasters such as hurricanes and wildfires.
- The CORE program uses the existing infrastructure at FEMA – with additional administrative support – to offer much-needed job opportunities with full-benefits for those individuals wishing to fight COVID-19 and natural disasters.
- Training and hiring of FEMA CORE members can rapidly occur within communities in need, and other Federal Agencies can request that they be detailed to their Departments.
- FEMA is directed to prioritize hiring from groups that include unemployed veterans, other unemployed due to the coronavirus, and AmeriCorps volunteers, Peace Corps volunteers, and Fulbright Scholars, whose service involuntarily ended.
- Poor credit and/or bankruptcy due to the Coronavirus pandemic will not disqualify any individual for eligibility to be hired as a FEMA Core employee.
- Among the needs for FEMA CORE teams may include:
 - providing logistical support for emergency procurement of medical equipment and other goods involved in COVID-19 response efforts;
 - facilitating COVID-19 testing and surveillance activities;
 - tracing contacts of infected individuals and their status while being quarantined; and
 - providing other disaster preparedness and response functions for other emergencies and natural disasters.