

THE PUBLIC SPEAKS

It's time to make flood insurance affordable again

By U.S. Sen. Bill Cassidy
Special to the American Press

Another hurricane season is behind us, and for the first time since 2015, not a single hurricane made landfall in Louisiana. That's good news for people with flood insurance, but even better news for people without it — a group that is growing fast because the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) has become too expensive.

In Louisiana, roughly 70,000 policyholders dropped their coverage between 2022 and 2024. The following year, another 52,000 followed suit. These aren't negligent homeowners — they are families priced out of protection by the astronomical costs of a post-Biden NFIP. And they are the people who need coverage most.

During the 2016 floods, a record-breaking river crest

GUEST COMMENTARY

of 46 feet swept the land completely out from under a Cypress Point home, despite it being elevated above the Base Flood Elevation.

Residents in LaPlace waited for rescue boats on the second floor of their homes during Hurricane Ida as their ground levels flooded.

Hurricane Katrina caused \$125 billion in damages, along with loss of life and emotional damage, which cannot be measured. Hurricane Laura damaged 125 miles of coastline and destroyed businesses, libraries, parks, court records, and more throughout Southwest Louisiana. Hurricane Delta left 46,000 homes either damaged or completely destroyed with significantly more flooding.

Louisiana has a long his-

tory of flooding. People need flood insurance. So why have one-fifth of Louisianians on the NFIP — nearly 100,000 — dropped their coverage?

Under President Biden, the Federal Emergency Management Agency implemented a new risk assessment program — Risk Rating 2.0 — in 2023, despite Congress never approving it. It jacks up rates, making premiums so expensive that people have no choice but to go without flood insurance.

I understand, as does President Trump, that Americans are tired of being ripped off. In 2019, we worked together to delay Risk Rating 2.0 for a year. Now, I want to do it again — permanently. Last June, I led a group of Republican colleagues in the effort to do so, and I won't stop working until we succeed. Last month, I followed up with FEMA, emphasizing the urgent need to address the

harm that Risk Rating 2.0 is doing to the NFIP as well as policyholders in my state and across the nation.

The American people need flood insurance to be cheaper, but also more reliable.

Right now, the NFIP relies on Congressional authorization, meaning that if Congress fails to authorize the program, as in the case of a government shutdown, the NFIP will lapse, leaving millions of Americans hanging.

I introduced legislation to maintain coverage automatically if Congress fails to reauthorize the NFIP. Coverage should be a guarantee, not a gamble on politicians' ability to get their act together.

Congress needs to act, and soon. In the meantime, federal support is critical. I've secured about \$13 billion for Louisiana through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), much of it going directly

to flood protection projects throughout the state.

If you go from LaPlace toward Baton Rouge, you'll see construction on a huge flood control structure that I helped get money for.

If you go to Lake Pontchartrain, you'll see what over 50 million dollars can do for local restoration efforts.

If you live in Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes, you're right near the Morganza to the Gulf levee project, which I am supporting with \$615 million through the IIJA and other mechanisms, including a package recently signed into law by President Donald Trump.

I find that moms rest easier knowing their families will stay safe and dry when the next storm comes. This funding gives her that peace of mind.

Let's make flood insurance reliable, accountable, and affordable again.