



**CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE  
COST ESTIMATE**

July 14, 2016

**S. 2971  
National Urban Search and Rescue Response System Act of 2016**

As ordered reported by the Senate Committee on Homeland Security  
and Governmental Affairs on May 25, 2016

**SUMMARY**

S. 2971 would amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to specifically authorize operations of the National Urban Search and Rescue Response System through 2019. The bill would authorize the appropriation of such sums as may be necessary for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to continue to administer that system. Under current law, the system maintains and manages emergency search and rescue teams and coordinates with state and local governments to mobilize those teams in the case of a natural disaster, terrorist activity, or other emergency.

CBO estimates that implementing S. 2971 would cost \$110 million over the 2017-2021 period, assuming appropriation of the necessary amounts. Pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply to this legislation because enacting it would not affect direct spending or revenues.

CBO estimates that enacting S. 2971 would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2027.

S. 2971 would impose intergovernmental and private-sector mandates, as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA), by eliminating an existing right to seek compensation for damages and by requiring employers to allow members of the urban search and rescue response system to reclaim their jobs upon completing a deployment to a disaster. Based on information from FEMA, CBO estimates that the cost to comply with the mandates would fall below the annual thresholds established in UMRA for intergovernmental and private-sector mandates (\$77 million and \$154 million, respectively, in 2016, adjusted annually for inflation).

## ESTIMATED COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The estimated budgetary effect of S. 2971 is shown in the following table. The costs of this legislation fall within budget function 450 (community and regional development).

	By Fiscal Year, in Millions of Dollars					2017- 2021
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
<b>INCREASES IN SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION</b>						
Estimated Authorization Level	36	37	38	0	0	111
Estimated Outlays	22	33	37	15	3	110

### BASIS OF ESTIMATE

For this estimate, CBO assumes that S. 2971 will be enacted near the start of 2017 and that the necessary amounts will be appropriated for each fiscal year. Estimated outlays are based on historical spending patterns for this program.

S. 2971 would authorize the appropriation of such sums as may be necessary through 2019 for FEMA to administer the National Urban Search and Rescue Response System. In 2016, the Congress provided \$35 million to operate that system. After accounting for anticipated increases in inflation, CBO estimates that implementing S. 2971 would cost \$110 million over the 2017-2021 period.

S. 2971 would require FEMA to reimburse state and local governments for the value of any benefits those governments pay to people who are injured while serving on an emergency search and rescue team. Under current law, people who are injured while serving on those teams are entitled to receive disability benefits from either the federal government or the applicable state or local government, but the federal government is not required to reimburse state and local governments. Based on information from FEMA about the number and type of injuries resulting from such service, CBO expects that any increase in federal costs from reimbursing state and local governments (which would be subject to appropriation) would be insignificant.

**PAY-AS-YOU-GO CONSIDERATIONS:** None.

## **INCREASE IN LONG-TERM DIRECT SPENDING AND DEFICITS**

CBO estimates that enacting S. 2971 would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2027.

## **INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND PRIVATE-SECTOR IMPACT**

S. 2971 would impose intergovernmental and private-sector mandates, as defined in UMRA. CBO estimates that the cost to comply with the mandates to state, local, and tribal governments and the private sector would fall below the annual thresholds established in UMRA for such mandates (\$77 million and \$154 million, respectively, in 2016, adjusted annually for inflation).

Under current law, members of search and rescue task forces have protection from tort liability when participating in federal preparedness activities. The bill would expand that protection to include additional training exercises. Such protection would impose a mandate on public and private entities because it would eliminate an existing right to seek compensation for damages. According to FEMA, no claims for damage have been filed regarding a training exercise, nor does the agency expect that any such claims would be filed under current law. Therefore, CBO estimates that the costs, if any, of this mandate would be negligible.

The bill also would require employers to allow task force members who are deployed to a disaster to reclaim their jobs upon completion of their service. According to FEMA, there are currently about 5,500 workers in the system; the duration of deployment is usually less than one month; and in general, most employers currently allow workers to reclaim their positions. Thus, CBO estimates that the cost for public and private-sector employers to comply with the mandate would fall below the annual thresholds.

### **ESTIMATE PREPARED BY:**

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