

# **WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE**

## **2021 REGULAR SESSION**

**Introduced**

### **House Bill 2683**

BY DELEGATE STEELE, BARRETT, DISERIO, FLUHARTY,  
HANNA, D. JEFFERIES, MAYNARD, AND SKAFF

(BY REQUEST OF THE STATE RESILIENCY  
OFFICE)

[INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 23, 2021; REFERRED TO THE  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS AND HOMELAND  
SECURITY THEN GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §29-31-2 of the Code of West Virginia 1931, as amended, relating  
2 to clarifying that the office is responsible to plan for emergency and disaster response,  
3 recovery, and resiliency, clarifying that the state resiliency officer is a member of the  
4 board, placing the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Resources on the  
5 board, requiring that the resiliency officer only vote in the event of a tie vote of the board,  
6 requiring that the board elect a vice-chair from its membership, creating the duties and  
7 responsibilities of the vice-chairman; eliminating the notice requirement for board  
8 meetings.

*Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:*

## **ARTICLE 31. STATE RESILIENCY AND FLOOD PROTECTION PLAN ACT.**

### **§29-31-2. State Resiliency Office**

1 (a) It is determined that a state authority is required to provide a coordinated effort and  
2 planning for emergency and disaster ~~planning~~, response, recovery, and resiliency between  
3 government agencies, first responders, and all other entities to reduce the loss of life and property,  
4 lessen the impact of future disasters, respond quickly to save lives, protect property and the  
5 environment, meet basic human needs, and provide economic growth and resilience in the  
6 aftermath of an incident. Therefore, the State Resiliency Office is hereby created. The office shall  
7 be organized within the Office of the Governor. The office will serve as the recipient of disaster  
8 recovery and resiliency funds, excluding federal Stafford Act funds, and the coordinating agency  
9 of recovery and resiliency efforts, including matching funds for other disaster recovery programs,  
10 excluding those funds and efforts under the direct control of the State Resiliency Officer pursuant  
11 to §15-5-4b and §15-5-24 of this code for a particular event.

12 (b)(1) The State Resiliency Office Board is also established and shall consist of the  
13 following members: the State Resiliency Officer; the Secretary of the Department of Commerce  
14 or his or her designee; the Director of the Division of Natural Resources or his or her designee;  
15 the Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection or his or her designee; the Executive

16 Director of the State Conservation Agency or his or her designee; the President of the West  
17 Virginia Emergency Management Council or his or her designee; the Secretary of the Department  
18 of Health and Human Resources or his or her designee; the Secretary of the Department of  
19 Homeland Security or his or her designee; the Secretary of Transportation or his or her designee;  
20 the Adjutant General of the West Virginia National Guard or his or her designee; the Director of  
21 the Division of Emergency Management within the Department of Homeland Security or his or  
22 her designee; two nonvoting members of the West Virginia Senate, to be appointed by the  
23 President of the Senate; and two nonvoting members of the West Virginia House of Delegates,  
24 to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates.

25 (2) A member of the board holds office so long as he or she retains the office or position  
26 by virtue of which he or she is serving on the board. A majority of the board is a quorum and the  
27 concurrence of a board in any matter within their duties is required for its determination. The  
28 members of the board may receive no compensation for their services on the committee, but are  
29 entitled to reimbursement of expenses, including traveling expenses necessarily incurred in the  
30 discharge of their duties on the board.

31 (3) The board shall:

32 (A) Provide for the keeping of a full and accurate record of all proceedings and of all  
33 resolutions, rules, and orders issued or adopted and of its other official actions;

34 (B) Shall adopt a seal, which shall be judicially noticed;

35 (C) Provide for an annual audit of the accounts of receipts and disbursements of the State  
36 Resiliency Office; and

37 (D) Perform those acts necessary for the execution of its functions under this article.

38 (c)(1) The State Resiliency Officer shall be the chair of the State Resiliency Office Board,  
39 and shall be appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. The State  
40 Resiliency Officer may cast a vote only in the event of a tie vote. The board shall elect from its  
41 voting membership a vice-chair. The vice-chair shall preside over the meetings of the board in

42 the absence of the chair. In the absence of both the chair and the vice-chair, In the absence of  
43 ~~the chair~~ any member designated by the members present may act as chair.

44 (2) The State Resiliency Officer shall be vested with the authority and duties prescribed to  
45 the office within this article.

46 (3) The State Resiliency Officer shall be a person who has:

47 (A) At least five years' managerial or strategic planning experience in matters relating to  
48 flood control and hazard mitigation or, alternatively, in disaster recovery, emergency  
49 management, or emergency response;

50 (B) At least a level IS-800 NIMS certification: *Provided*, That if the State Resiliency Officer  
51 does not have a level IS-800 NIMS certification when appointed, he or she shall become so  
52 certified within one year following appointment; and

53 (C) Be thoroughly knowledgeable in matters relating to flood control and hazard mitigation,  
54 or alternatively, in matters relating to disaster recovery, emergency management, and emergency  
55 response.

56 (4) The State Resiliency Officer shall employ a deputy who shall assist the State Resiliency  
57 Officer in carrying out the duties of the office. The State Resiliency Office Board shall meet and  
58 submit a list of no more than five nor less than two of the most qualified persons to the Governor  
59 within 90 days of the occurrence of a vacancy in this deputy position. This deputy shall be  
60 appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. Applicants for the deputy  
61 position shall at a minimum:

62 (A) Have at least three years' managerial or strategic planning experience in matters  
63 relating to flood control and hazard mitigation or, alternatively, in disaster recovery, emergency  
64 management, or emergency response;

65 (B) Have at least a level E/L 950 NIMS certification: *Provided*, That if the deputy State  
66 Resiliency Officer does not have a level E/L 950 NIMS certification when appointed, he or she  
67 shall become so certified within one year following appointment; and

68 (C) Be thoroughly knowledgeable in matters relating to flood control and hazard mitigation,  
69 or alternatively, in matters relating to disaster recovery, emergency management, and emergency  
70 response; and

71 (D) If the State Resiliency Officer has his or her primary experience in flood control and  
72 hazard mitigation then his or her deputy must have experience in disaster recovery, emergency  
73 management, or emergency response; alternatively, if the State Resiliency Officer has his or her  
74 primary experience in disaster recovery, emergency management, or emergency response then  
75 his or her deputy must have experience in flood control and hazard mitigation.

76 (d) The board shall meet no less than once each calendar quarter at the time and place  
77 designated by the chair and the board shall work together with the State Resiliency Officer to fulfill  
78 the mission given to the State Resiliency Office to coordinate efforts for emergency and disaster  
79 planning, response, recovery, and resiliency between government agencies, first responders and  
80 others .

81 The board will assist and advise the State Resiliency Officer in developing policies to  
82 accomplish, at a minimum, the following specific tasks in order to achieve these goals, and will  
83 assist the State Resiliency Officer in devising plans and developing procedures which will ensure  
84 that agencies and political subdivisions of the state carry out these following specific tasks:

85 (1) Establish mechanisms to coordinate resiliency-related programs and activities among  
86 state agencies and to encourage intergovernmental as well as cross-sector coordination and  
87 collaboration;

88 (2) Evaluate the state's role in construction permitting process and identify opportunities  
89 to expedite the permitting process post-disaster and for selected types of mitigation and  
90 adaptation actions;

91 (3) Conduct a review of laws and regulations to identify those that create or add to risk, or  
92 interfere with the ability to reduce risk or to improve resiliency;

93 (4) Conduct an inventory of relevant critical planned activity by state agencies to determine

94 their proposed impact upon resiliency;

95 (5) Make recommendations regarding practical steps that can be taken to improve  
96 efficiencies, and to pool and leverage resources to improve resiliency;

97 (6) Identify, prioritize, and evaluate issues affecting implementation of mitigation and  
98 adaptation actions, including, but limited to, the effect of loss of land in context of zoning and other  
99 land use regulations, possible conflicts between public hazard mitigation/adaptation planning and  
100 private property interests (e.g. buy-out programs, projects to increase flood storage), develop  
101 guidance for cities and towns, real estate professionals, property owners under existing law and  
102 regulations; and develop proposals for changes in laws, policies, and regulations, as needed;

103 (7) Ensure all counties and municipalities have up to date Hazard Mitigation Plans and  
104 Local Comprehensive Disaster Plans that are consistent with and coordinated to the state's  
105 Hazard Mitigation Plans and Comprehensive Disaster Plans; including, but not limited to, assisting  
106 them in developing planning guidance for cities and towns to complete and/or update Hazard  
107 Mitigation Plans; providing technical assistance to help counties and municipalities meet these  
108 standards; and provide notice to counties and municipalities of funding opportunities to implement  
109 projects outlined in their Hazard Mitigation Plans;

110 (8) Conduct risk assessments, including, but not limited to, examining state highway  
111 corridors and associated drainage systems for stormwater inundation, impacts of downed trees,  
112 effects on utilities, etc.; assessment of known stormwater impacts between state highways and  
113 municipal drainage systems, options to eliminate or mitigate such impact; a housing vulnerability  
114 assessment for structures in riparian zones; and a vulnerability assessment of the state's historic  
115 and cultural resources;

116 (9) Establish working groups that will conduct assessments for varied sectors of the  
117 economy, such as small business, ports and river traffic, agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism;  
118 these assessments should address vulnerabilities and economic impacts, options to mitigate  
119 impacts, options to improve preparedness, response and recovery, and economic opportunities

120 associated with design, engineering, technological and other skills and capabilities that can  
121 improve resilience;

122 (10) Establish emergency permitting procedures to expedite issuance of state permits  
123 following disasters, and develop guidance (model procedures) for political subdivisions to follow;  
124 and

125 (11) Establish a model long-term recovery plan that would be activated after catastrophic  
126 events.

127 All decisions of the board shall be decided by a majority vote of the members.

128 (e) The State Resiliency Office shall provide adequate staff from that office to ensure the  
129 ~~meetings of the board are properly noticed~~ meetings of the board are facilitated, board meeting  
130 minutes are taken, records and correspondence kept and that reports of the board are produced  
131 in a timely manner.

132 (f) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this code:

133 (1) The meetings of the board are not subject to the provisions of §6-9A-1 *et seq.* of this  
134 code.

135 (2) The following are exempt from public disclosure under the provisions of chapter 29B  
136 of this code:

137 (A) All deliberations of the board;

138 (B) The materials, in any medium, including hard copy and electronic, placed in the  
139 custody of the board as a result of any of its duties; and

140 (C) All records of the board, in the possession of the board, and generated by the board,  
141 due to their falling under several exceptions to public disclosure including, but not limited to, that  
142 for security or disaster recovery plans and risk assessments.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to clarify that the office is responsible to plan for emergency and disaster response, recovery, and resiliency, clarifying that the state resiliency officer is a member of the board, placing the secretary of the department of health

and human resources on the board, requiring that the resiliency officer only vote in the event of a tie vote of the board, requiring that the board elect a vice-chair from its membership, creating the duties and responsibilities of the vice-chairman; eliminating the notice requirement for board meetings.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.