

WASHINGTON (Sept. 27) -- U.S. Rep. Gus M. Bilirakis (R-Fla.) supported the passage of a bill on Thursday that would expand the federal flood-insurance program to include windstorm damage.

The Flood Insurance Reform and Modernization Act of 2007, H.R. 3121, reauthorizes the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) for an additional five years. The bill includes a number of important reforms incorporated into the bipartisan bill that passed the Republican-led House last Congress (H.R. 4973). It also expands NFIP to include windstorm coverage.

Following the vote, Bilirakis said it was only common sense to offer a federal program covering flood damage from storms to also cover wind damage.

“Expanding the federal flood-insurance program to include wind damage simply makes sense. Those who have their homes flooded are often in the path of destructive storms that wield powerful winds,” said Bilirakis. “Common sense would dictate that if we are seeking to help protect homeowners from the liability that comes from destructive natural disasters like hurricanes, we would consider all of the forces of nature associated with these storms.”

Despite Republican opposition and a veto threat from the White House, Congressman Bilirakis was keen to point out that the cost of reauthorizing the flood insurance program with wind protection would be much less than maintaining the status quo.

“While I understand the costs associated with this bill are an issue with some of my colleagues, the cost of doing nothing is much greater,” said Bilirakis. “Many of the homeowners in my District, in the State of Florida, and in disaster-prone areas throughout the United States spend each day staring down the barrel of a gun - waiting for the storm to hit that will put them and their families on a path to financial ruin.”