

Legislative Express

Session 2025 | Issue 3

Bills Begin Moving Through Committees

Now that all bills for this Session have been filed, they are being assigned to Committees and Subcommittees for review and consideration. Here are a couple of bills TAUD is following which will be considered in committees this week.

[SB178/HB22 - Governing body to provide public with opportunity to comment at meeting](#)

This bill requires the governing body of a governmental entity subject to the Open Meetings Act (the Sunshine Law) to reserve a period of public comment ***on any matter germane to the jurisdiction of the governing body*** regardless of whether the matter is listed on the agenda for the meeting. A couple of years ago, the Sunshine Law was amended to require that governmental entities reserve a time for public comment to matters germane to items on the meeting's agenda. If passed, this bill would allow public comment on anything related to utility business during the public comment period of a utility board meeting. For most folks, this may not be a substantial change since most utilities will allow customers who decide to attend a utility board meeting to speak to the board. However, a utility may want to consider establishing restrictions on the public comment period and requiring advance notice from any person who wants to speak during the public comment period in light of the expansion of items upon which public comment can be made, which the utility can do under existing law.

[SB518/HB561 - Governing body to provide public with opportunity to comment at meeting.](#)

For the first time, this bill would authorize a governmental utility to borrow money to provide emergency cash flow for the utility. Historically, a utility could only issue debt for capital improvements, not to provide cash to meet operating expenses. Debt to provide an emergency cash flow does requires the approval of the Comptroller's office and has other conditions: (1) the principal value of the note issued during any 12 month period cannot exceed 60% of the utility's cash flow for the same period; (2) any note issued must be paid off during this same 12 month period; (3) the utility must submit a corrective action plan with the request for approval to the Comptroller; and (4) upon approval of the issuance of the note, the Comptroller will refer the utility to the TBOUR.

[SB87/HB265](#)

Sponsors

Category

Senate Status

House Status

Comment

[Sunset - Tennessee board of utility regulation.](#)

Sen. Jackson, Ed; Rep. Lafferty, Justin

Government Organization

02/12/25 - Set for Senate Government Operations Consent Calendar 02/19/25.

02/13/25 - Set for House Consent on 02/20/25.

This bill extends the Tennessee board of utility regulation to June 30, 2029.

[SB114/HB136](#)

Sponsors

Category

Senate Status

House Status

Comment

[Debt reporting requirements - state and local governmental entities.](#)

Sen. Harshbarger, Bobby; Rep. Atchley, Fred

Public Finance

02/12/25 - Set for Senate State & Local Government Committee 02/18/25.

02/12/25 - Set for House State & Local Government Committee 02/19/25.

This bill broadens the financial disclosure obligations of state and local governmental entities to include the disclosure of bond covenant violations and credit rating downgrades to the comptroller of the treasury or the comptroller's designee.

[SB162](#)

Sponsors

Category

Senate Status

Comment

[Prohibits public water system operators from adding fluoride to water systems.](#)

Sen. Hensley, Joey

Utilities

01/27/25 - Referred to Senate Energy, Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee.

This bill prohibits public water systems from adding fluoride to their water systems.

[SB178/HB22](#)

Sponsors

Category

Senate Status

House Status

Comment

[Governing body to provide public with opportunity to comment at meeting.](#)

Sen. Lowe, Adam; Rep. Davis, Elaine

Public Employees

01/27/25 - Referred to Senate State & Local Government Committee.

02/12/25 - Set for House Public Service Subcommittee 02/19/25.

This bill requires a governing body subject to the open meetings act to reserve a period of public comment on any matter germane to the jurisdiction of the governing body regardless of whether the matter is listed on the agenda for the meeting. Under current law, public comment is limited to matters germane to items on the meeting's agenda.

SB191/HB1338

Redefines local government to include a water, wastewater, or energy authority.

Sponsors Sen. Taylor, Brent; Rep. Lamberth, William
Category Public Finance
Senate Status 01/27/25 - Referred to Senate Energy, Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee.
House Status 02/10/25 - Introduced in the House

Comment This bill requires that any local government seeking to issue "heightened risk debt" to submit a request for approval to the Comptroller's Office. The Comptroller's Office has 15 business days to approve or disapprove the request. If the Comptroller does not respond to the request within 15 business days, the local government may proceed to issue the debt. Local government includes any incorporated city or town; metropolitan government; county; water, wastewater, or energy authority; or utility district. Heightened risk debt means any debt obligation containing: (1) a variable interest rate; (2) an interest rate reset provision which allows the interest rate to change at certain intervals during the life of the debt; or (3) a put option. The bill further defines local government for purposes of the issuance of balloon indebtedness to include any incorporated city or town; metropolitan government; county; water, wastewater, or energy authority; or utility district.

SB212/HB885

Agendas for meetings of governing bodies.

Sponsors Sen. Gardenhire, Todd; Rep. Todd, Chris
Category Public Employees
Senate Status 02/10/25 - Referred to Senate State & Local Government Committee.
House Status 02/10/25 - Referred to House Public Service Subcommittee.

Comment This bill requires the governing body of any political subdivision of Tennessee: (1) to make available to the public at no charge the agenda for an upcoming regular meeting in a place accessible to the public at least 48 hours before the regular meeting; (2) to only deliberate or act upon items not listed in the agenda unless its bylaws or properly adopted rules permit such actions and complies with all other applicable state laws permitting such action; and (3); to not circumvent this requirement by withholding items from the agenda to avoid public disclosure of business to be considered. The bill further provides that publishing the agenda on the political subdivision's website is considered a place of public access. Currently, only the legislative bodies of cities, towns, counties, and metro governments must do the above.

SB258/HB1139

Definition of public water system under the TN Safe Drinking Water Act - inclusion.

Sponsors Sen. Pody, Mark; Rep. Boyd, Clark
Category Environment & Nature
Senate Status 02/10/25 - Referred to Senate Energy, Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee.
House Status 02/10/25 - Introduced in the House

Comment This bill seems to remove from the definition of public water system a treatment facility which is used solely for softening of water.

SB307/HB1054

Construction project delivery methods.

Sponsors Sen. Briggs, Richard; Rep. McKenzie, Sam
Category Local Government
Senate Status 02/10/25 - Introduced in the Senate
House Status 02/11/25 - Referred to House Cities & Counties Subcommittee.

Comment This bill authorizes a local government having a population of 100,000 or more according to the 2020 census and having centralized purchasing with a full-time purchasing agent to use any of the following project delivery methods for the construction of local projects or additions to existing buildings: (1) construction manager at-risk; (2) design-bid-build; (3) design-build; or (4) design-build-finance-operate. While the definition of local government includes utility districts and authorities, these utilities may not be able to use these methods. The federal census does not include population information for utility districts and authorities. Having central purchasing and a full-time purchasing agent are concepts which only seem to apply to cities and counties not utility districts and authorities.

SB369/HB742

Quotes required by local governments for purchases.

Sponsors Sen. Briggs, Richard; Rep. McKenzie, Sam
Category Local Government
Senate Status 02/10/25 - Introduced in the Senate
House Status 02/05/25 - Introduced in the House

Comment When a city or county increases its threshold for competitive bidding over \$10,000, it must do so by resolution or ordinance passed by the governing body. If a purchase falls between 40% of the new bid threshold or some lower amount as may be established by the governing body by resolution or ordinance, the purchase can be made in the open market without publishing a notice in a newspaper of general circulation, but the city or county must attempt to obtain at least three written price quotes to ensure competitive pricing.

SB370/HB967

Taxes and fees collected by merchants and sellers.

Sponsors Sen. Briggs, Richard; Rep. Hawk, David
Category Taxes General
Senate Status 02/10/25 - Introduced in the Senate
House Status 02/11/25 - Referred to House Banking & Consumer Affairs Subcommittee.

Comment This bill provides that when the amount of a state or local tax or fee (including sales tax) is calculated as a percentage of an electronic payment transaction amount and is listed separately on the payment invoice or other demand for payment, this amount must be excluded from the interchange fee charged for that electronic payment transaction. The bill defines "interchange fee" as a fee established, charged, or received by a payment card network for the purpose of compensating the issuer for its involvement in an electronic payment transaction.

[SB377/HB548](#)

[Tennessee Procurement Protection Act.](#)

Sponsors Sen. Rose, Paul; Rep. Cochran, Mark
 Category State Government
 Senate Status 02/10/25 - Introduced in the Senate
 House Status 02/05/25 - Referred to House Public Service Subcommittee.

Comment This bill creates the Tennessee Procurement Protection Act (the Act). This Act prohibits the public procurement of final products or services from a foreign adversary company, whether those products or services are sold directly by the foreign adversary company or through a third-party vendor. This Act permits the public procurement of products and services from a company that has operations, affiliates, and subsidiaries in a foreign adversary so long as the company is not a foreign adversary company. This Act prohibits a foreign adversary company from bidding on or submitting a proposal for a contract with a state agency or political subdivision of this state for goods or services. The Act further mandates a state agency or political subdivision require a company that submits a bid or proposal for a contract for goods or services to certify that the company is not a foreign adversary company.

[SB378/HB549](#)

[Tennessee Critical Infrastructure Act.](#)

Sponsors Sen. Rose, Paul; Rep. Cochran, Mark
 Category State Government
 Senate Status 02/10/25 - Introduced in the Senate
 House Status 02/05/25 - Referred to House Public Service Subcommittee.

Comment This bill enacts the "Tennessee Critical Infrastructure Protection Act." This Act prohibits a governmental entity from entering into a contract or other agreement relating to critical infrastructure in this state with a company that is a foreign principal from a foreign adversary country if the agreement would allow such foreign principal to directly or remotely access or control critical infrastructure in this state. A governmental or non-governmental entity may enter into a contract or agreement relating to critical infrastructure with a foreign principal from a foreign adversary country or use products or services produced by such foreign principal if: (1) there is no other reasonable option for addressing the need relevant to state critical infrastructure; (2) the contract is pre-approved by the department of finance and administration; and (3) not entering into such a contract or agreement would pose a greater threat to the state than the threat associated with entering into the contract.

[SB380/HB421](#)

[Continuing education for utility district commissioners.](#)

Sponsors Sen. Walley, Page; Rep. Marsh, Pat
 Category Public Employees
 Senate Status 02/12/25 - Set for Senate State & Local Government Committee 02/18/25.
 House Status 02/12/25 - House deferred 02/26/25.

Comment This bill does two things. First, it reduces the number of required hours for continuing education for governing board members of utilities from 12 hours to 6 hours for each three year continuing education period. Second, it permits a person who has become ineligible to serve as a utility district commissioner due to the failure to timely get the required initial training or continuing education to file a petition for reinstatement of the person's eligibility to serve as a utility district commissioner with the TBOUR.

SB418/HB4

Actions brought against a local governmental entity under the TN Governmental Tort Liability Act - recovery amounts.

Sponsors Sen. Akbari, Raumesh; Rep. Bulso, Gino
Category Tort Liability
Senate Status 02/12/25 - Referred to Senate Judiciary Committee.
House Status 02/12/25 - House Civil Justice Subcommittee deferred to 02/26/24.

Comment This bill increases the amount that a person may recover in an action brought against a local governmental entity under the Tennessee Governmental Tort Liability Act for claims brought on or after July 1, 2025, to \$750,000 for the bodily injury or death of one person in one accident, \$1,500,000 for the bodily injury or death of all persons in one accident, and \$250,000 for the injury or destruction of property of others in one accident. The current limits which were set in 2007 are \$300,000 for the bodily injury or death of one person in one accident, \$700,000 for the bodily injury or death of all persons in one accident, and \$100,000 for the injury or destruction of property of others in one accident.

SB425/HB66

Confidential records - exceptions.

Sponsors Sen. Reeves, Shane; Rep. Sparks, Mike
Category Local Government
Senate Status 02/10/25 - Introduced in the Senate
House Status 01/28/25 - Referred to House Public Service Subcommittee.

Comment This bill makes the residential information of local government employees such as street address, city, state and zip code confidential under the public records act. This is really not much a change since existing law already makes the "residential street address for any county, municipal or other public employee" confidential.

SB518/HB561

Authorizes certain utility systems to borrow money in anticipation of revenue collections.

Sponsors Sen. Reeves, Shane; Rep. Capley, Kip
Category Local Government
Senate Status 02/10/25 - Introduced in the Senate
House Status 02/12/25 - Set for House Business & Utilities Subcommittee 02/19/25.

Comment This bill authorizes water and wastewater systems operated by municipalities and counties, municipal energy authorities, water and wastewater treatment authorities, and utility districts to borrow money in anticipation of revenue collections to provide emergency cash flow for such systems. The principal value of the notes during any 12 month period must not exceed 60% of the utility's cash flow for the same period and must be retired or paid in full before the end of the same period. These notes require approval by the Comptroller's Office which will develop a corrective action plan for the utility as part of the approval. If the Comptroller approves debt for emergency cash flow, the utility will be referred to the TBOUR which may order any remedial measures it deems necessary for the utility. This bill further authorizes the TBOUR to remove a member of a utility's governing body (other than an elected official) for any of the following: (1) failure to comply with Â§ 12-4-101; (i2) misconduct, whether or not the misconduct results in criminal charges; (3) Failure to exercise reasonable oversight; (4) actions or failures causing a utility system to display severe managerial incompetence as described in Â§ 7-82-704(a)(3); (5) failure to follow board directives, except for good cause shown; or (6) Any other reason provided by law.

[SB670/HB541](#)

[Classification of property as a wetland.](#)

Sponsors Sen. Taylor, Brent; Rep. Vaughan, Kevin
Category Environment & Nature
Senate Status 02/10/25 - Introduced in the Senate
House Status 02/05/25 - Caption bill held on House clerk's desk pending amendment.
Comment This bill prohibits TDEC from applying criteria that will result in the classification of real property as a wetland, or otherwise regulating real property as a wetland, unless the property is classified as a wetland under federal law.

[SB717/HB796](#)

[Infrastructure oversight and customer choice.](#)

Sponsors Sen. Taylor, Brent; Rep. Vaughan, Kevin
Category Utilities
Senate Status 02/12/25 - Referred to Senate State & Local Government Committee.
House Status 02/10/25 - Referred to House Business & Utilities Subcommittee.
Comment This bill prohibits public utilities from requiring that utility infrastructure be constructed by the utility company and requires that customers be allowed to choose their own contractors for installation. Allows public utilities to establish reasonable construction and manufacturing specifications to ensure proper construction with appropriate materials. Prohibits public utilities from requiring that materials or services for utility infrastructure construction be sourced from a specific vendor or manufacturer. Allows public utilities to review and approve plans and designs for the installation of utility infrastructure. Defines "public utility" or "utility" as the water, wastewater, natural gas, or electric system of a county, metropolitan government, or municipality.

[SB730/HB903](#)

[Fee for viewing records.](#)

Sponsors Sen. Lowe, Adam; Rep. Vital, Greg
Category Media & Publishing
Senate Status 02/10/25 - Introduced in the Senate
House Status 02/10/25 - Referred to House Public Service Subcommittee.
Comment This bill permits a public entity to require a requestor of public records to pay a fee to view records if the records requested reasonably require more than one hour of an employee's time to collect for viewing and inspection by the requestor. After the first hour, the public entity may charge a fee at an hourly rate that is in proportion to the rate of pay of the employee who is collecting the records. This is a change from current law which does not allow charging a requestor anything if the requestor only wants to view public records but not copy them.

SB731/HB795

Changes on a contractor or developer's application for development site plans or inspections.

Sponsors Sen. Pody, Mark; Rep. Vaughan, Kevin
Category Local Government
Senate Status 02/10/25 - Introduced in the Senate
House Status 02/05/25 - Introduced in the House

Comment This bill requires a local government to accept an application for the review of a development plan or site inspection and issue an approval of the application or issue a written report of deficiencies within 30 days of receipt of the application. If a written report of deficiencies is issued, the requested permit shall be issued upon receipt of documentation showing the deficiency has been satisfactorily cured. If the local government issues 3 or more written reports with deficiencies, it must reimburse the developer 50% of the fees paid during the application process. Local government means means a county, municipality, or local governing body responsible for reviewing a development application, development plan, or a site inspection submitted by a developer. This bill further provides: (1) a local government and developer or contractor may enter into a contract for the funding, building, or development of nonessential infrastructure with nonessential infrastructure being defined to mean "any infrastructure that is not necessary for the creation, ongoing maintenance, and growth of a development; (2) once a local government enters into a development contract with a developer, no changes can be made unless mutually agreed upon the developer and the local government, including any changes to nonessential infrastructure.

SB743/HB834

Authority of the board of water and wastewater operator certification.

Sponsors Sen. Yager, Ken; Rep. Keisling, Kelly
Category Environment & Nature
Senate Status 02/10/25 - Introduced in the Senate
House Status 02/10/25 - Referred to House Agriculture & Natural Resources Subcommittee.

Comment This bill prohibits the water and wastewater operator certification board from delegating to a third-party its authority to determine minimum operator competency or to prepare conduct, or grade examinations to applicants seeking operator certification. The bill requires the exam consist of the same questions for all applicants and include a minimum of 10% of the total questions for each classification on state regulatory questions germane to the specific operator classification.

SB795/HB1173

Purchasing of goods and services by local governments without bid or quotations.

Sponsors Sen. Bailey, Paul; Rep. Williams, Ryan
Category Government Contracts
Senate Status 02/10/25 - Introduced in the Senate
House Status 02/10/25 - Introduced in the House

Comment This bill authorizes local governments to purchase goods and services directly, without bid or quotations, from vendors awarded general services administration schedule contracts at prices equal to the vendor's current general services administration schedule price.

SB825/HB1072

Classification of property as a wetland.

Sponsors

Sen. Hensley, Joey; Rep. Warner, Todd

Category

Environment & Nature

Senate Status

02/10/25 - Introduced in the Senate

House Status

02/11/25 - Referred to House Agriculture & Natural Resources Subcommittee.

Comment

this bill prohibits TDEC from applying criteria that will result in the classification of real property as a wetland if the property is prior converted cropland that is exempt from classification as a wetland under federal law.

SB880/HB896

Regulatory action for a substance, mixture, or chemical related to drinking water, water pollution control.

Sponsors

Sen. Reeves, Shane; Rep. Todd, Chris

Category

Government Regulation

Senate Status

02/10/25 - Introduced in the Senate

House Status

02/10/25 - Referred to House Agriculture & Natural Resources Subcommittee.

Comment

This bill prohibits a state agency from disseminating, proposing, or finalizing any regulatory action for a substance, mixture, or chemical related to drinking water, water pollution control, hazardous substances, contaminated site remediation, air quality, or solid or hazardous waste handling unless the regulatory action is based upon the best available peer-reviewed scientific and technical information.

SB952/HB978

Discontinuation of service as it relates to the Utilities' Cut-Off Procedures Act. Broadly captioned.

Sponsors

Sen. Powers, Bill; Rep. Burkhart, Jeff

Category

Utilities

Senate Status

02/12/25 - Referred to Senate State & Local Government Committee.

House Status

02/10/25 - Held on House clerk's desk.

Comment

This appears to be a caption bill. As written, it requires a utility governed by the Utilities' Cut-Off Procedures Act to publish its policy governing the discontinuation of service for nonpayment of service on the utility's website in a publicly accessible location.

SB988/HB375

Fees assessed by local governments.

Sponsors

Sen. Haile, Ferrell; Rep. Zachary, Jason

Category

Local Government

Senate Status

02/10/25 - Introduced in the Senate

House Status

02/05/25 - Referred to House Cities & Counties Subcommittee.

Comment

This bill requires each department, agency, and official in every county, municipal government, or metropolitan government that assesses and collects a fee of \$500 to maintain documentation describing the justification and cost basis for such fee. The language is broad enough to apply to a tap fee, capacity fee, or other fee over \$500 of a county or municipal utility.

SB1138/HB543

Operation of a sewerage system outside the boundaries of a city or town.

Sponsors Sen. Taylor, Brent; Rep. Vaughan, Kevin
Category Local Government
Senate Status 02/10/25 - Introduced in the Senate
House Status 02/05/25 - Referred to House Agriculture & Natural Resources Subcommittee.

Comment This bill provides that a city or town that has operated a sewerage system outside of the corporate boundaries of the city or town for 25 years or more cannot cease operation of the sewerage system outside its corporate boundaries so long as the sewerage system maintains sufficient capacity as determined by a study conducted by TACIR. This bill provides that a utility district that has operated a sewerage system in the unincorporated area of a county for 25 years or more cannot cease operation of the sewerage system in the unincorporated area so long as the sewerage system maintains sufficient capacity as determined by a study conducted by TACIR.

SB1139/HB542

Utility to review plans of development for compliance with infrastructure codes.

Sponsors Sen. Taylor, Brent; Rep. Vaughan, Kevin
Category Local Government
Senate Status 02/10/25 - Introduced in the Senate
House Status 02/05/25 - Referred to House Business & Utilities Subcommittee.

Comment This bill requires a county-owned or municipal-owned water utility to review plans of development for compliance with water, electric, and natural gas infrastructure codes within 30 days of the plan's submission. If the utility does not complete the review within 30 days, the developer or person who submitted the plan may hire a third-party examiner to examine the plan. No later than 10 business days after the third-party examiner submits the documents required, the utility must: (1) approve the plans; (2) provide the third-party examiner a report of deficiencies; or (3) request additional information to ensure compliance with applicable codes. Failure to take any of these three actions within 10 business days will result in the plans being deemed approved. The bill further caps any fees for the inspection of the installation and construction of water, electric, and natural gas infrastructure to 2% of the total cost of the development. The bill defines "third-party plans examiner" to mean an engineer with expertise in water, electric, or natural gas infrastructure.

SB1141/HB897

Threshold for the presence of fluoride in a public water system.

Sponsors Sen. Crowe, Rusty; Rep. Todd, Chris
Category Environment & Nature
Senate Status 02/10/25 - Introduced in the Senate
House Status 02/10/25 - Referred to House Agriculture & Natural Resources Subcommittee.

Comment This bill: (1) decreases from 1.5 milligrams per liter to 0.4 milligrams per liter the threshold for the presence of fluoride in a public water system that requires an increase in the frequency of fluoride-level testing from quarterly to monthly; and (2) requires public water systems to cease adding fluoride to drinking water supplies by July 31, 2025, and provide written notice of cessation of fluoridation to customers.

SB1142/HB898

Certificate of analysis for any water sold by the utility system that contains fluoride.

Sponsors Sen. Crowe, Rusty; Rep. Todd, Chris
Category Utilities
Senate Status 02/10/25 - Introduced in the Senate
House Status 02/12/25 - House sponsor changed from T. Darby to C. Todd.
Comment This bill requires each utility system to obtain a certificate of analysis for any water sold by the utility system that contains fluoride, and to post the certificate and the material safety data sheet for fluoride online.

SB1404/HB365

Action of a municipality that affects tax obligations for property owners who are located outside the municipality's corporate boundary.

Sponsors Sen. Hensley, Joey; Rep. Fritts, Monty
Category Local Government
Senate Status 02/10/25 - Introduced in the Senate
House Status 02/05/25 - Referred to House Cities & Counties Subcommittee.
Comment This bill prohibits a municipality, or an instrumentality of a municipality, from taking an action that affects or has the potential to affect the tax obligations, fees, or other costs for real property owners whose property is located outside of a municipality's corporate boundary, unless the action is approved by the county legislative body in which such property is located. This bill may be broad enough to prohibit a municipal utility from charging a higher tap fee or other fee charged to a real property owner to get service outside the municipality's boundary than inside the boundary.

SB6003/HB6003

Creates Hurricane Helene interest payment fund.

Sponsors Sen. Johnson, Jack; Rep. Lamberth, William
Category Public Finance
Senate Status 02/10/25 - Signed by Senate speaker.
House Status 02/11/25 - Signed by House speaker.
Executive Status 02/12/25 - Signed by governor.
Comment This bill (1) creates a Hurricane Helene interest payment fund which can be used to pay local governments' interest costs for up to three years on money borrowed to pay eligible disaster recovery costs related to Hurricane Helene; and (2) a governor's response and recovery fund which can be used of the fund is to respond to, or recover from, an declared emergency, including agricultural recovery efforts related to an emergency, unemployment assistance related to an emergency, and business recovery assistance related to an emergency.

SB6004/HB6002

TEMA assisting a political subdivision or local emergency management agency with recovery from disasters and emergencies on public property.

Sponsors Sen. Johnson, Jack; Rep. Lamberth, William

Category Veterans & Military Affairs

Senate Status 02/10/25 - Signed by Senate speaker.

House Status 02/11/25 - Signed by House speaker.

Executive Status 02/12/25 - Signed by governor.

Comment

Upon the declaration of an emergency, this bill (1) authorizes TEMA to assist a political subdivision or local emergency management agency with recovery from disasters and emergencies on public property at the request of the political subdivision or agency; and suspends certain eligibility requirements for unemployment benefits for eligible claimants who reside or work in counties for which this state has requested a major disaster declaration.