Sacramento – The State Assembly voted 77-0 today to approve Assembly Bill (AB) 323 by Assemblymember Tom Daly (D – Anaheim). Daly’s legislation establishes a new reserve account in the State Treasury and strengthens California’s fiscal readiness to respond to natural disasters.

AB 323 creates the California Disaster Preparedness Account, a state savings mechanism for disaster recovery. This provides an additional tool for the state to build the cash reserves needed for immediate response, even during an economic downturn.

“Natural disasters are occurring more frequently and many are causing extensive damage,” Daly said. “This reserve account is fiscally responsible. It will allow California to save money during budget surplus years, mitigating challenges that would occur during a future reduction or stagnation in the state’s revenues.”

Typically, in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster, the state pays the upfront costs of disaster response pending partial or full reimbursement from the federal government. Such reimbursements can unfortunately take months or even years.

AB 323 is jointly-authored by several other Assemblymembers.

“California is no stranger to natural disasters and with nearly 40 million residents it is imperative that we prepare and protect our citizenry from disasters,” said Assemblymember Jim Cooper (D-Elk Grove). “AB 323 makes significant steps to ensure that we are well-equipped to prepare, respond, and recover from future disasters.”

“AB 323 is critical to California’s ability to address the needs of our constituents during times of natural disasters quickly and in a fiscally responsible manner,” Assemblymember James Ramos (D-Highland) said. “In emergencies, delivery of services to our constituents cannot and should not wait. A Disaster Preparedness Account ensures our state has a reliable fund to meet the tremendous costs of response and recovery whether or not federal reimbursement is delayed or even received.”
“California’s new normal is rampant and unforgiving wildfires, many of which my community has had to endure and recover from since I have been in the Legislature,” said Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin (D – Camarillo). “Having funds earmarked for disaster recovery and being able to track federal reimbursements will be critical to keeping a balanced state budget.”

“In the event of a disaster, communities should be able to focus on repairing and healing,” said Assemblymember Tim Grayson (D – Concord). “This Disaster Preparedness Account will give Californians confidence that even in the face of an economic downturn, their safety and well-being will be the state’s top priority.”

“With the rise of wildfires and the risk of other natural disasters like earthquakes in California, it is critical that we plan accordingly and have the resources in place to respond and recover in the event of an emergency,” said Assemblymember Rudy Salas (D-Bakersfield). “The establishment of the California Disaster Preparedness Account will help our state responsibly plan and save for natural disasters during budget surplus years.”

The measure now moves to the State Senate for further consideration.

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*Assemblymember Tom Daly represents California’s 69th Assembly District, which includes the cities of Anaheim, Garden Grove, Orange and Santa Ana.*