

Blumenthal, Murphy reintroduce concrete legislation

By Eric Bedner

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WASHINGTON — U.S. Sens. Richard Blumenthal and Christopher S. Murphy have reintroduced federal legislation aimed at providing \$200 million to homeowners and business owners with crumbling foundations.

A bill led by Blumenthal would establish a grant program

administered through the Federal Emergency Management Agency to provide up to \$100 million over a five-year period.

States would be able to reimburse affected homeowners, condominium associations, and small business owners whose structures are deteriorating due to pyrrhotite, the mineral causing foundations to crumble.

Murphy's bill also would allo-

cate \$100 million over five years through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to states like Connecticut that have created nonprofit organizations to assist with foundations.

Both bills are co-sponsored by U.S. Sens. Edward Markey, D-Mass., and Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., who announced her candidacy for the presidency Saturday.

Blumenthal said the proposals would provide needed relief to those struggling with "a continuing financial and emotional nightmare."

"The federal government must step up and provide real relief from the unconscionable stress and expense made worse by the unacceptable inaction of many insurance companies," he said. "I will continue to fight to assist these homeowners and businesses in meeting this urgent challenge."

The measures come in addi-

tion to what the federal government already has agreed upon, including the IRS allowing affected Connecticut homeowners to take advantage of a federal tax deduction that provides relief to those qualified through December 2020.

"Helping families dealing with crumbling foundations continues to be critically important to me," Murphy said. "I'm proud to partner with Senator Blumenthal in reintroducing these bills to provide assistance and some relief to these homeowners."

Massachusetts has several communities that also have homes with crumbling foundations due to their proximity to the Connecticut quarry that's been at the center of the issue.

"Families and business owners in western Massachusetts and beyond are facing enormous bills to fix crumbling home and building foundations," Warren said. "My Senate colleagues and

I are working to pass legislation that will help protect Massachusetts families and small businesses from these unforeseen costs."

"Thousands of homeowners in Massachusetts and Connecticut are on the hook for costly foundation repairs that they never could have anticipated," Markey said. "The federal government must do what it can to provide assistance, including direct aid, to relieve the unfair and financial and emotional stresses the issue is causing in our communities."

Blumenthal and Murphy introduced the same legislation last year, neither of which gained traction.

They also have introduced legislation to require the National Institute of Standards and Technology to establish regulations for acceptable levels of pyrrhotite.