American Public Power Association: U.S. Congressman Bruce Westerman (Arkansas) Receives Public Service Award

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The American Public Power Association ("APPA") announced on February 25th that United States Congressman Bruce Westerman is the recipient of the organization's Public Service Award.

Congressman Westerman represents Arkansas' Fourt Congressional District in the United States House of Representatives where he serves as Chairman of the Committee on Natural Resources.

APPA stated that it was honoring Congressman Westerman for:

… exceptional leadership on issues of importance to public power—particularly in his vital role as chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee.

Congressman Westerman was cited for his leadership role in championing legislation focused on permitting reform and wildfire mitigation. Specifically noted were the following bills:

- Fix Our Forests Act.
- SPEED Act.

The SPEED Act is described as a permitting reform bill that proposes significant changes to the National Environmental Policy Act ("NEPA"). This legislation has been further described as broadening the range of actions for which an agency is exempted from preparing a NEPA document to include:

- An action already reviewed in accordance with the requirements in another federal law that serves a similar function to NEPA action.
- An action already reviewed in accordance with the requirements in the state or Tribal laws that serves similar functions to NEPA.

The Fix our Forests Act has been described as legislation focused on improving U.S. forest health by addressing wildfire threats, streamlining environmental reviews, and additionally:

- Establishing new and updated programs to reduce wildfire risks across high priority fire sheds, with an emphasis on cross-boundary collaboration.
- Streamlining and expanding tools for forest health projects.
- Creating a single interagency program to help communities in the wildland-urban interface.
- Expanding research and demonstration initiatives.
- Strengthening coordination efforts across agencies.
- Improving reforestation, seedling supply, and nursery capacity.

The APPA describes itself as the:

… voice of not-for-profit, community-owned utilities that power approximately 2,000 towns and cities nationwide.

A copy of the news release can be found here.