

Water/Legislation: United States Senate Passes Water Resources Development Act

Arkansas Environmental, Energy, and Water Law Blog



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The United States Senate in a 94-3 vote passed the Water Resources Development Act ("WRDA") on September 15th.

The legislation includes measures such as:

- Provides 4.8 billion for programs under the Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act
- Funding to provide assistance to Flint, Michigan and other cities with impaired water supplies
- Modernizing the cost-share formula for channel deepening projects (from 45 to 50 feet)
- Extension of the authorization to provide funds to Harper Maintenance Trust Fund Donors and energy transfer ports
- Authorization of eight new navigation developments
- Provision of 4.8 billion for programs under the Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act
- Authorizes United States Army Corps of Engineers projects in the areas of:
 - Navigation
 - Flood Management
 - Ecosystem restoration
 - Targets aid to rural drinking systems
 - Increased funding for water technology innovation

The Congressional Budget Office ("CBO") estimated in a June 17th report that the legislation would cost about 4.8 billion over the next five years and 10.6 billion over the 2017-2026 period (assuming appropriation of the authorized necessary amounts). CBO also estimated that enacting legislation would reduce direct spending by 59 million over the 2017-2026 period and the staff of the Joint Committee on Taxation estimated that enacting the Bill would reduce revenues by 53 million over the same period. The CBO also estimated that enacting the bill would not increase net direct spending on on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2027.

A diverse group of organizations supported the legislation. Examples include:

- American Association of Port Authorities
- National League of Cities
- National Association of Counties
- National Association of Clean Water Agencies
- Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies
- National Association of Flood and Storm Water Management Agencies
- American Public Works Association

- Water Research Foundation
- Rural Community Assistance Partnership
- American Society of Civil Engineers
- Water Environment Federation

The publication *Politico* quotes United House Representative Transportation Committee Chairman Bill Shuster as stating “his staff is talking to GOP leadership ‘every hour’, probably, ‘about getting the House version of WRDA to the floor before the lawmakers leave town.’ The House Transportation Committee Chairman said he’s hoping that lower chamber will get there next week. . .”

The House version of WRDA is stated to be less comprehensive than the Senate’s version.