

Senate and House pass Water Resources Development Act

September 30, 2016

On September 15, the Senate passed the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) (S. 2848), marking a major milestone in the two-year water policy bill. The bill passed with a final vote of 95-3. The House version of the bill was voted upon once an amendment authorizing funding to aid Flint, MI, was approved, and it passed on September 28 with a final vote of 399-25.

In a press release, Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chairman and sponsor of WRDA, Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-OK), praised the Senate's response: "With strong bipartisan support, the Republican-led Senate has once again moved an economy-boosting infrastructure bill with the passage of WRDA 2016". Inhofe highlighted the benefits that WRDA provides to American water infrastructure through funding for water-quality projects and aid. The ongoing water-quality issues in Flint, MI, provided a strong impetus for the bill's passage in the Senate, with the authorization of \$220 million in aid going toward emergency water supply efforts, particularly in areas with contaminated drinking water. The bill authorizes the US Army Corps of Engineers to initiate various water resources development and conservation projects.

Critics of the Senate bill have voiced concerns over language regarding coal ash and increased federal involvement in local programs involving water quality. Other than these provisions, the bill re-authorizes the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act (GLRI) (S.1024) through fiscal year (FY) 2021, the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act (S.1724) through the next ten years, and the Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Act (S.1674) through FY2020. The bill also contains language regarding natural disaster risk reduction including floods, hurricanes, and storms.

The bill will go on to a conference committee, where its House and Senate counterparts will be reconciled.

Sources: Congress.gov, Senate Environment & Public Works Committee, Sen. Ron Johnson (R-WI) Press Release
