

T&I Member Day Speech – January 14, 2026 - Congresswoman Jen Kiggans

Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee, thank you for holding this Member Day and for the opportunity to raise issues that are deeply local to my district, but national in consequence.

The work of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee directly affects whether communities can build housing, modernize infrastructure, move people safely, and support our national defense. I want to highlight several examples from Virginia's Second Congressional District that show why federal policy decisions made here matter across the country.

First, I want to address the role of the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the continued regulatory uncertainty surrounding *Waters of the United States*, or WOTUS.

In my district, housing development and critical infrastructure projects were significantly delayed under the prior WOTUS rule. Although the Supreme Court's decision in *Sackett v. EPA* was intended to restore clarity and limit federal jurisdiction under the Clean Water Act, that clarity did not reach the ground.

Instead, landowners, local governments, and developers experienced continued uncertainty, overly broad assertions of federal authority, inconsistent application, and insufficient guidance from federal agencies. The result was delayed housing, stalled infrastructure projects, and increased costs in a region already facing housing affordability challenges and workforce shortages.

Clean Water Act permitting requires predictability. When regulated communities cannot determine whether a project will trigger federal jurisdiction, projects stall, costs rise, and communities suffer. That is not environmental stewardship, it is regulatory paralysis. And this challenge is not unique to Virginia. States and localities across the country are dealing with the same uncertainty.

I appreciate that the current Administration has begun laying the groundwork for new rulemaking to update and replace the prior WOTUS framework. A rule that faithfully reflects *Sackett*, respects statutory limits, and restores a clear partnership with states is essential.

But Congress's role does not end when a new rule is issued. We must ensure that any revised WOTUS rule is implemented promptly, consistently, and in good faith by the Corps and EPA, so that communities finally receive the certainty they have been promised.

Second, I want to address aviation safety and the air traffic control workforce.

Virginia's Second Congressional District is home to Naval Air Station Oceana, the Navy's East Coast Master Jet Base. As a former naval aviator, I understand firsthand

how critical safe, reliable airspace operations are, not only for commercial aviation, but for military readiness and training.

Over the course of this Congress, I have worked alongside my colleagues on the House Armed Services Committee to advance legislative efforts focused on improving airspace safety, strengthening coordination between military and civilian aviation, and ensuring our aviation infrastructure can safely support both readiness and commercial operations.

I appreciate the Committee's work, along with the President's call to action, to advance a \$12.5 billion investment through the Working Families Tax Cut to begin modernizing aging air traffic control systems and support controller staffing and training.

However, I was disappointed to see that funding specifically dedicated to air traffic control tower replacement and improvements was removed prior to final passage. This past year I had the privilege to meet with and visit the local FAA Norfolk Air Traffic Control Tower. I was astonished to see the poor conditions of an aging tower that our controller workforce currently perform their duties on a daily basis in. I respectfully urge the Committee to continue examining this issue as we move forward, because modernizing our air traffic system, including our towers, and supporting the controller workforce is essential to aviation safety, economic activity, and national defense.

Finally, I want to highlight the Coast Guard Parity Act.

As a Navy veteran, I deeply understand the value and sacrifice of military service. Yet today, the Coast Guard remains the only branch of our Armed Forces without full parity in separation policies.

This legislation would ensure that enlisted Coast Guard members with 18 or more years of service are not involuntarily separated before qualifying for retirement, aligning Coast Guard standards with those of every other service branch.

This strengthens morale, improves retention, and honors long-serving Coast Guardsmen who perform critical missions in maritime safety, border security, and disaster response. For coastal districts like mine, this is a local issue, but it is also a national issue of fairness and readiness.

Across all of these issues, permitting certainty, aviation safety, and military parity, the common theme is the importance of ensuring that federal policies work effectively for the communities they are intended to serve.

I appreciate the Committee's leadership in these areas and look forward to continuing to work together to promote certainty, safety, and fairness for communities in Virginia and across the nation.