

December 6, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Johnson, Leader Schumer, Leader Jeffries, and Leader McConnell:

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) writes to express its strong support for S. 4367, the bipartisan conference agreement to the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2024. The nation's dams, levees, ports, and inland waterways infrastructure systems are essential to public safety, economic development and growth, and preservation of environmental resources. These infrastructure systems protect hundreds of communities from flooding, support millions of jobs, and generate trillions of dollars in economic activity. Many of these systems, however, have reached the end of their design life, and the investment gap must be closed if we hope to both repair and modernize these systems to be competitive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We would like to express our appreciation to the leaders on the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee and Senate Environment and Public Works Committee for keeping WRDA passage on schedule for 2024. Since 2014, Congress has passed a final WRDA agreement every two years, and thanks to the efforts of committee leaders and staff, this year's bill remains on that trajectory. WRDA provides an opportunity to demonstrate bipartisan collaboration in support of the nation's water resources infrastructure. The biennial schedule provides the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) with a degree of predictability which allows for more effective planning and development of vital water resources projects nationwide.

Several provisions in this year's WRDA agreement are essential to strengthening public safety, improving infrastructure resilience, and providing more effective services to the American people. This agreement provides an opportunity to build on progress made in recent years, as well as new opportunities for growth.

Specifically, ASCE supports critical efforts made to improve the safety of the nation's dams. Section 1132 of the agreement would officially reauthorize the National Dam Safety Program (NDSP). The NDSP is the primary source of federal funding that goes directly to states to support their own dam safety programs. Activities supported by NDSP State Assistance Grants include inspection and monitoring, emergency preparedness, and staffing and training needs. The NDSP's legislative authorization officially expired on September 30, 2023. Section 1132 reauthorizes this critical program through 2028 and increases the total grant amounts states may be able to receive from the program by eliminating unnecessary funding restrictions. This section also makes key reforms to the High Hazard Potential Dam Rehabilitation Grant program by improving access to competitive grants for disadvantaged communities in need of necessary dam repairs, as well as clarifying eligibility and application requirements.

The agreement would also build on progress made in WRDA 2022 to account for the nation's low-head dams. Low-head dams are small, river spanning structures which produce dangerous, but undetectable currents that pose significant public safety concerns. Low-head dams may be difficult to identify, leaving the public unaware of the hazards they pose. In 2022, WRDA authorized the creation of a low-head dam inventory to improve safety around these structures. This year's agreement builds on this by requiring low-head dams to be incorporated into the National Inventory of Dams. This will help better identify these structures and allow for greater safety precautions to protect the public.

ASCE is also grateful for the inclusion of section 1126, which would adjust the cost share formula for the Inland Waterways Trust Fund (IWTF). Currently, 65 percent of the cost for inland waterways projects is paid for through the general fund, and the remaining 35 percent through the IWTF. This year's WRDA agreement adjusts that formula to a 75-25 split, a change long supported by ASCE. This cost share formula adjustment will help ensure that the IWTF remains available for future projects and will help to reduce the inland waterways project backlog. Previous cost share adjustments for certain projects have allowed for more leveraging of funds and increased project efficiency. This demonstrates that making adjustments to the cost share formula encourages faster construction and can expedite the completion of inland navigation projects.

ASCE thanks House and Senate leadership for its commitment to the nation's water resources infrastructure, and we encourage you to bring S. 4367 up for consideration as soon as possible. If you have any additional questions, we encourage you to contact Matthew McGinn ([mmcginn@asce.org](mailto:mmcginn@asce.org)) with our Government Relations team.

Sincerely,



Caroline Sevier  
Managing Director,  
Government Relations and Infrastructure Initiatives  
American Society of Civil Engineers