



December 5, 2024

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Republican Leader  
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Mike Johnson  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives

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

On behalf of the National Association of Counties (NACo), the only organization representing the nation's 3,069 counties, parishes, and boroughs, we write to express our strong support for the House Amendment to S. 4367, the *Thomas R. Carper Water Resources Development Act of 2024*, and urge its swift passage.

If passed, this proposal would advance county interests in achieving our economic development initiatives and advancing our water infrastructure needs. Counties strongly support several key provisions, including:

**Reauthorization of the Economic Development Administration**

The U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA), which is the only federal agency dedicated solely to economic development activities, is vital for county economic development investments by helping foster resilient and diversified local economies, support American businesses, strengthen workforce development, and enhance critical infrastructure including broadband.

The need for congressional action to modernize the EDA cannot be overstated. Since EDA was last reauthorized in 2004, the economic challenges communities and the nation face have dramatically evolved, leaving local communities facing increasing threats to their economic stability and prosperity.

This proposal would make vital improvements and reforms to the agency's core programs, enhancing its ability to address critical national priorities such as disaster preparedness and mitigation, workforce development, broadband expansion, small business support, rural community development, and attraction of inbound investment abroad.

## **Water Resources Development Act of 2024**

As owners, users and regulators of water resources and infrastructure, counties are directly impacted by the policies and funding levels authorized in Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) legislation. As the authorizing legislation for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), WRDA provides county governments with critical assistance to protect, maintain and develop water infrastructure systems. WRDA advances county interests related to ports, inland waterways, levees, dams, wetlands, watersheds and coastal restoration.

WRDA 2024 includes multiple provisions that are beneficial to counties, such as increasing the federal cost share for inland waterway projects from 65 percent to 75 percent and directing the Corps to make timely updates to their online permit finder resource to provide up-to-date information on the status of project permits. WRDA 2024 also directs the Corps to designate a community project advisor to educate non-federal sponsors, such as counties, about operations, maintenance, repair, replacement, and rehabilitation responsibilities associated with a water resources development project.

Counties appreciate your leadership in championing this legislation and thank you for your commitment to negotiating a bipartisan, bicameral agreement that includes reauthorization of the EDA and WRDA.

Sincerely,



Matthew D. Chase  
CEO/Executive Director